

Exemplary Teachers' Perspectives on Performance

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Master of Teaching and Learning

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Abstract

This study investigated exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance in order to understand the complex human interactions that constituted teaching and learning of the highest order. Theories explaining the complex nature of teacher excellence remain limited. The purpose of this study was to shed some light on the notion of performance from the perspective of exemplary teachers and answer key research questions: what are exemplary teachers' perspectives on the notion of performance, and how do exemplary teachers enact these perspectives?

The use of a case study research design allowed for a number of methods to be used to explore the topic. Five teachers that had received National Excellence in Teaching Awards were interviewed and observed. Two were videoed, and a group interview concluded the data generation phase. Qualitative methodology was used to allow the participants to describe, in their own context, how they perceived performance and to provide further insight into the richness, complexity and range of teacher attitudes and values. Perspectives revealed there was no single way of understanding performance; rather this was determined to some extent by participants' worldview. The phenomenological research approach used allowed participants to describe their perspectives on performance in an open and enlightened way, thus successfully gaining entry into their conceptual world.

The perspectives of exemplary teachers in this study revealed four key conceptual themes as being relevant to the notion of performance: relationships and influences, self-concept, reflection and renewal, and performance expectations. Prominent amongst these findings was the conclusion that these teachers had an overwhelming passion for learning and excellence in terms of expectations for themselves and the students they

taught, an ability to reflect in a self-critical and natural way, a genuine desire to interact and engage with people, and above all, a caring disposition towards people and their performance. These teachers saw themselves as learners, continuously developing, and through a strong self-belief, changing as their knowledge changed. How and why they made decisions was closely linked to their beliefs, assumptions and dispositions they held. Participants' perspectives indicated that high performance expectations relied on the relationship between these beliefs and attitudes, and students' achieving well, not only academically, but also first and foremost, in all aspects of being a person. Exemplary teachers in this study wanted to motivate students for life, to show their real talent and potential.

In this study, exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance showed that they were emotionally committed to learn, motivated, and through thinking and accessing information in a variety of ways, were prepared to learn in a worldly way. They were passionate about choosing to use their ability and skills to make learning exciting and interesting for students in the context that they perceived students and society expected. These exemplary teachers saw it as their moral responsibility to serve society, to fulfil a need. What made a teaching activity so special for the exemplary teachers in this study was the feeling they got from the activity itself. They had taken charge of their conscious experiences and inner life.

Dedication

To Richard Owen McDowell: Exemplary father and teacher. Died 8/5/2002.

“It feels like, The Lord of the Forest, Tane Mahuta, has fallen.
The ground still shakes, small trees underneath have been crushed,
the birds are silent.....
The great tree’s roots are exposed now – his true values revealed,
but his trunk – his real character, remains strong for a long time.
There is no shadow – the birds sing again.”

Craig McDowell, Eulogy, May 2002

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*Though the mind fades memories linger
Though the body fails the spirit prevails
Though the scroll burns, the letters dance in the air.*

Rabbi Zev Schostack (Source unknown)

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Introduction

This chapter describes the context and rationale behind this study, defines the key terms used, and examines the relevant literature on exemplary teachers and performance.

Context

During recent reforms in education there has been a tendency to focus on school effectiveness and improvement, and enhanced competency and professionalism from teachers. The resulting competencies were often based on subject and pedagogical knowledge, teacher credentials, programme accreditation and student performance. Only cursory attention had been given to aspects of teaching, which showed the increasingly complex nature of knowing students, and establishing meaningful relationships. Saphier and Gower (1997) suggested that the most skilful teachers were aware of the complexity of their job. Collinson, Killeavey and Stephenson (1999) claimed that the focus on competence needed to change to a focus on caring as the motivation for competence.

A description of teacher performance as a distinct phenomenon in relevant literature on teacher effectiveness and quality was rare. Phrases like ‘performance management’, ‘performance appraisal’, and ‘performance criteria’, were common. The New Zealand Education Review Office (1998) defined performance as being “the results actually achieved by a particular teacher within the framework of an individual performance

agreement as appraised by the employer”(p.3). Cardno and Piggot-Irvine (1997) defined performance as “what a teacher actually does specific to a job situation”(p. 86), rather than to what he or she can do. This study does not attempt to prefigure the notion of ‘performance’ in teaching. It is concerned with the participant’s own views on performance.

Are there limiting factors to performance in that teachers will perform only to a prescribed level or standard? New Zealand Ministry of Education (1999a) defined performance objectives as results that were expected to be achieved by teachers. Are these criteria appropriate for exemplary teachers? Bridson (1998) challenged aspects of teacher performance in suggesting that we needed to shift the focus in New Zealand schools to increased teacher motivation in order to maintain performance. Black (1998) suggested that improved learning required thoughtful reflection, discussion, interaction between teachers, and taught, formative feedback. In addition, Black indicated that any assessment practices that are indicative of improved performance must be supported, if not initiated, by policies. If the betterment of students and teaching is genuinely desired, such policies must be singularly focussed on achieving optimum consistency between the curriculum, pedagogy, and the different purposes which assessment serves.

Rationale

In better understanding exemplary teachers and their perspectives on performance, information and insights might be obtained about: getting the best out of all teachers, providing an environment to enable the sharing of exemplary teacher’s perspectives on performance to motivate other teachers, attracting more people with personal

characteristics of exemplary teachers into the teaching profession and keeping them there, and promoting change to current performance criteria and standards.

Collinson (1994), Lewis, Parsad, Carey, Bartfai, Farris, Smerdon, (1999), Canter and Canter (1994), and Ramsay and Oliver (1995) all agreed that evolving research and theory on exemplary teaching might provide improvements to a range of professional development opportunities for all teachers. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1999b) recognised that there was currently a challenge, due to changing demands of curriculum and society, to ensure the availability of exemplary teachers and to attract the best talent to the profession.

Theories explaining the complex nature of teacher excellence remain limited. The purpose of this study was to shed some light on the notion of performance from the perspective of exemplary teachers and answer key research questions: what are exemplary teachers' perspectives on the notion of performance, and how do exemplary teachers enact these perspectives?

Definitions of Key Terms

Exemplary

Merriam-Webster (2000) defined exemplary as “deserving of imitation because of excellence”. In reviewing the literature, McKay (1997) used the phrase “representative of excellence”, while Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (1999) claimed that exemplary teachers could be recognised “when accomplishments and results can serve

as a model for peers". Synonymous terms included "outstanding" (Stone, 1987; Lowman, 1996), "superlative" (McKay, 1997; Van Schaack and Glick, 1982), "expert" (Campbell, 1988), "high-performing" (Canter and Canter, 1994), and "great" (Boylan, Battersby, Wallace, Retallick, Edwards, 1991).

Teachers

For the purpose of this study, 'teachers' were referred to as teachers from schools in and around Christchurch who over the three years prior to 2000 had been recipients of a recognised National Excellence in Teaching Award.

Perspective

Merriam-Webster (2000) defined perspective as "a point of view, an insight: the capacity to view things and judge their relative importance".

Performance

Merriam-Webster (2000) defined performance as: "to accomplish something through ability to perform which implies action that follows agreed upon requirements and often connotes special skill."

Relevant Literature

A review of relevant literature provided a theoretical context for the participant's perspectives. As well as providing a context for the teachers' experiences, a theoretical framework seemed essential for this study, to comprehend the wider implications of the understanding of performance in teaching. The research for this study began by reviewing the work of Collinson (1994; 1996b; 1999). In her studies, and developing theory on exemplary teachers, the combination of competence, skilful relationships, and character emerged as recognisable features of exemplary teachers. Throughout these studies and other literature, three areas of research emerged that were relevant to this study: the recognisable features of exemplary teachers; the influence of their capacity for reflection and thinking; and descriptions of teacher performance through technical expertise. The following review of relevant literature enabled me to examine the perspectives of exemplary teachers and the notion of performance.

Van Schaack and Glick (1982) summarised the present research portrait of exemplary teachers. They defined "superlative teachers" as having characteristics and attributes that made them well known and recognisable. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) have completed research in New Zealand on exemplary teachers as part of an Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development Study (1994). They developed a number of characteristics of "quality" teachers. The influence of an early role model and the part exemplary teachers play in enriching students' lives appeared to be motivational factors to teacher performance. Sederberg and Clark (1990) and Stone (1987) noted that dedication, genuine caring for others, and innovation emerged as other common attributes of 'effective' teachers.

Are excellent teachers recognisable? Sergiovanni (1991) argued that a single concept of exemplary teaching could not be established empirically. Board (1992) suggested that there was an overriding attribute that great teachers possessed: passion for learning, for knowledge, for excellence, for life. Lowman (1996) found that exemplary teachers were those who created positive, everlasting memories of learning. These themes paralleled what Collinson (1994; 1999), Ramsay and Oliver (1995), and McKay (1997) identified as characteristics of exemplary teachers: intellectual excitement, a commitment to teaching, high interpersonal concern, and effective motivational strategies.

The participants in this study had all been recognised as 'excellent' through a nationally recognised Excellence in Teaching Award. The guidelines for reasons for nomination included: the ability to inspire and help students, the esteem and respect in which the teacher is held, and outstanding contributions and accomplishments both in and out of the classroom. These were common characteristics of exemplary teachers that other studies had identified.

Stone (1987) argued that there was a relationship between the self of the teacher and effective teaching. Kelly (1955) suggested that there was no need for special concepts to explain motivation and activity. Goodson (1992) found that exemplary teachers constantly referred to personal and biographical factors when giving accounts of their life. From their point of view, it would seem that professional practices were embedded in wider life concerns.

Van Schaack and Glick's (1982) study included numerous statements about performance by 'superlative teachers' that they themselves thought were meaningful to

them. Success, total commitment, and responsibility towards student learning were commonplace self-conceived performance criteria. Having a strong self-concept was apparent, in addition to stimulating a student's dedication to eternal questioning and continuous improvement. The exemplary teachers in Collinson (1994) talked about the importance of modelling desirable behaviour, values and dispositions. Intrapersonal knowledge was something that excellent teachers consistently mentioned as they worked to develop themselves. Collinson (1999) outlined an ethic of care, work ethic, and a disposition toward continuous learning as characteristics of exemplary teachers. Collinson (1996b) wrote about aspects of teacher knowledge that were considered so important by exemplary teachers for life in general that they taught them, both explicitly and by modelling. Teachers in the study by Sederberg and Clark (1990) described their inner driving force as "a passion, a fury to teach" (p. 8). Their accomplishments made them come back into the classroom and continue to teach.

Ramsay and Oliver (1995) identified individual constructs of teaching as the way teachers reflected on their own practice. They argued that exemplary teachers were more reflective about their own style and process, and that these teachers were driven by their own professional growth and seeking continuous improvement in methods and practice. Participants in the study by Leithwood and Stager (1986) reported that throughout their experiences in teaching, a necessary change was to be more reflective in problem solving. The ability to apply what has been learned and explain the how and why of such a process both to themselves and to their students appeared to be an important part of an exemplary teacher's conceptions of performance. Their understanding of students and the influence they have on colleagues was therefore enhanced.

Collinson (1996b) described self-knowledge as systematically seeking to develop “the full range of one’s capacities for sensing, wondering, learning, understanding, loving and aspiring” (p. 11-12). This statement reflected the characteristics of exemplary teachers noted earlier and indicated the relevance of exploring perspectives of exemplary teachers in relation to their performance.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (1994), developed a comprehensive protocol to define teacher “quality” as encompassing five dimensions of teacher performance: knowledge of substantive curriculum areas and content, pedagogical skill, reflection and the ability to be self-critical, empathy and commitment to the acknowledgement of the dignity of others in the pursuit of affective as well as cognitive outcomes, and managerial competence, both within and outside the classroom. Hargreaves (1997) understood good teaching to not just be a matter of being efficient, developing competence, mastering techniques and possessing the right kind of knowledge. Good teaching involved emotional work.

The Education Department in United States of America through the development of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (1994) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (1995) defined principles of performance in teaching. These core principles suggested that teacher motivation and behaviour to create a positive learning environment were a measure of excellence. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1999a) had established standards to indicate performance, which encompassed similar dimensions. By achieving these standards, teachers were to be recognised for their contribution to improving learning outcomes for students.

Overview

This study investigated the perspectives of exemplary teachers in order to understand the complex human interactions that constitute teaching and learning of the highest order. A better understanding of exemplary teachers might also provide clues about personal and organisational factors that contribute to creating an educational environment in which teachers could excel. How to establish and nurture the necessary environment for exemplary teaching seemed to be an area that was missing from studies to date. Two contrasting perspectives exemplify the debate in which this study was located. In Vroom (1995) his model of motivation included a teacher's confidence that his or her exemplary performance would be recognised and rewarded. Yet House (1971) contended that performance came from an emphasis on human relationships and social interaction and having accomplished worthwhile and challenging tasks. This study was concerned with the latter.

Introduction

This chapter discusses the chosen research methodology and the methods used in the research process. Qualitative research methods were used to allow the participants to describe their perspectives on performance. Procedures by which the data was generated and analysed are described. Issues of validity and reliability are identified, along with ethical issues.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Sergiovanni (1991) contended that teachers and other professional practitioners view their work quite differently from theorists and researchers. They have, he concluded, a different worldview. Teachers sought to make sense of challenges and create knowledge in use, they needed to believe in what they were doing as they practice, they relied and trusted their own accumulated experiences in making decisions, and appreciated the complexities of problems faced in schools by emphasising spontaneity, variety, and uncertainty. The key research question in this study asked how exemplary teachers viewed the notion of performance. To understand an exemplary teacher's perspective on performance, exploring aspects of their values and beliefs or worldview, would be essential.

Qualitative research techniques were used in this study to provide insight into the richness, complexity and range of teacher attitudes, values, and perspectives. A variety

of fieldwork techniques provided a range of ways to discover and record people's experiences and how they interpreted them (Bauman & Adair, 1992; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Cohen & Manion, 1994). Interviews, combined with participant observation, formed the core of the approach.

The inquiry aimed to be broad and open-ended with the intended discovery of what is understood by the participants about the phenomenon of 'performance'. This approach reflected the emergent research design principles of qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Patton (1990) described triangulation as using different data generation methods to enable consistency of findings. The use of different methods of data generation enabled various responses about conceptions of performance to be presented in a useful and pragmatic way, which strengthened the validity of the study and reinforced that multiple sources of data could lead to a deeper, fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied.

Since this study explored a specific phenomenon, a phenomenological orientation was appropriate. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) summarised phenomenological research approaches as the way that researchers gained entry into participants' conceptual worlds. The aim was to describe and interpret how and what meanings exemplary teachers' construct around the notion of performance in their teaching lives. It was these meanings of experiences that constituted their social reality. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) contended that qualitative research using a phenomenological approach, through multiple ways of interpreting experiences, produced an interpretation of this reality that was useful in understanding the whole person.

The methodological approach taken in this study had a number of limitations and challenges. Some were common to all qualitative research and some specific to this study. Yin (1984) identified those generic to qualitative research as being the lack of scientific rigour, generalisability and the time consuming nature of such studies. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) also mentioned data reduction difficulties, reliability, and procedures not being standardised as problems, when using a qualitative approach.

Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Taylor and Bogdan (1998), and Rose and Webb (1998) all countered that qualitative research could be very rigorous when the researcher was able to demonstrate an understanding of a perfect fit between the data and explanations of social phenomena. An analytic induction process, which forced the researcher to refine and qualify theories and propositions – what was done and why it was done this way rather than applying a set of rules, could achieve this.

Research Design

The case study method was considered by some to be the mainstay of educational research (Merriam, 1988). It was appropriate for this study because it allowed me to explore and describe the perspectives of individuals or a group when the context, setting, or frame of reference was important (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). A case study is a method of studying an entity or phenomenon in depth. Yin (1984) outlined the parameters of a case study as “an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used” (p. 23).

Major data generating techniques for case studies, where the focus is on a particular group of people, were formal and informal interviews, and participant observation (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). The predominant data generation methods in this study were in depth, semi-structured interviews with all five participants but observation video recall sessions and a group interview also provided good data and insights from the exemplary teachers. Of primary interest was the balance between perspectives on performance in both a personal and professional context. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to describe the phenomenon of interest in their own language and to talk about their career, life and experiences relevant to them and their teaching.

Hatch (1995) suggested that qualitative investigation gave as much attention to internal as it did to external factors that influenced a person's action or response. The research design emerged, rather than being entirely constructed in advance. The interaction between the researcher and the participants was largely unpredictable. Hatch (1995) also implied that various value systems involved, including those of the researcher, might interact in unpredictable ways to influence the outcome. This influenced my decision to interview participants first, to establish a rapport and to enable me to remain open to the perspectives on performance that participants had, before observing them.

Participants

Data was generated from a range of participants. Five teachers that had been awarded an Excellence in Teaching award were interviewed. Two were from secondary schools, three from primary schools. The five participants taught at a variety of types of schools:

state integrated, private, Year 1 - 8 rural primary, Year 1 – 6 primary. There was a good age spread, mix of experience, different levels of responsibility, and gender.

All participants appeared comfortable about sharing quite personal information during interviews. Each came to the first interview knowing the focus of my study, but each had quite a different perspective on performance and the purpose of the study, both of which added to the richness of the information. Van Schaack and Glick (1982), Ramsay and Oliver (1995), and Lowman (1996) used recorded observations and interviews in their studies of exemplary teachers. By individually interviewing participants, I aimed to capture each participant's perspective on performance and the beliefs they held around these, without being influenced by the other participants' perspectives.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted to determine initial themes, practice interview techniques, and assess practical challenges of observation and interviewing. There were also opportunities for some initial data analysis.

I selected two teachers from my own school at the time, that were considered as being exemplary by myself, peers, students and parents. Both had been recognised through recent promotion and were involved in a wide range of areas of responsibility including extra curricula.

For each teacher, I conducted an interview and observed a class, with the observation also videoed. Separately, each teacher watched a video of his or her teaching. Verbatim

transcripts of each interview and video recall were completed. I then conducted an interview with them both together discussing aspects of the study, which was again recorded and transcribed.

The following useful information resulted: how long transcriptions would take to be done; the actual length of transcriptions in relation to the length of interview, how the video recall would work, recording techniques both in film and notes, and the impact on actual teachers and students. It also enabled some preliminary data analysis techniques to be explored.

Participant Selection

Participants were selected from those having received a National Excellence in Teaching Award. Within the educational sector, at primary and secondary school level, this is very well recognised and credible. I also knew of local teachers who had received this award, and this would result in minimal travelling for me, allowing flexibility in terms of interview and observation schedules.

Four teachers from the local area that had received awards over the last three years were identified through publication of the award results, another participant was known to me personally. They were each phoned to gauge interest in whether they were interested in participation. A brief introduction included why they had been selected, the rationale behind the study, the anticipated timeline, and the level of time commitment.

All five indicated interest to be involved, and letters as in Appendix A, outlining the details and requirement of the study, and a participant consent form, were mailed to participants. All five participants returned the consent form, and agreed to take part in the study. Details in the letter included some further rationale, an acknowledgement of their recognised ability, the purpose of study, proposed methods of data generation and ethical issues. An additional copy of the information sheet with details of the study and agreement for them to retain was also provided.

Ethics

Participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw from the study up until the time of the group interview. In the event that this occurred, all data attributed to them would have been destroyed. Attributable data were not used during the group interview. Participants were only identified as having received an award through a recognised New Zealand teaching excellence award scheme. Statements from the interviews were used for illustrative purposes but participants were identified by a pseudonym. The Principals of each participant's school were written to before the observation of the participant. This letter is attached as Appendix B. Issues presented to the Principal included that the focus of the study was on the teacher, the non-observation of the students, and the aim to have minimal impact in the classroom.

Security of Data

Confidentiality of the raw data was maintained between myself, my supervisors, and my interview transcribers, who were briefed to respect confidentiality. Only I had copies of

all the transcripts. The data and findings were stored on a computer that had a password known only to me. A back up copy was securely stored in my home. I undertook to keep the data for a period of three years, for use only for this thesis, and any conference papers, journal articles, or subsequent reports drawn from the thesis.

Individual Interviews

Four of the interviews were conducted at the participant's school; one was conducted at a participant's home. The participants had the choice as to the environment where the interview would be conducted. There was the occasional interruption of the interviews completed at schools. This sometimes affected the flow of interviews but at no time did I feel that these disruptions made an impact on the participants. Participants were all cooperative and flexible. These face-to-face interviews lasted for approximately one hour and verbatim transcriptions were completed in addition to my interview notes. Each interview was guided or semi-structured in nature. The interview questions devised are shown as Appendix C.

Care was taken to pursue key areas relevant to performance that the participants themselves raised. At some stage during all interviews, with the focus of this study being performance, participants were asked to share what their specific thoughts were about the notion of performance. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions themselves.

Participants were forwarded a copy of their own interview transcript to read, comment on and return to me. In some cases participants contributed their own interpretation of

the transcripts. These additional comments added significantly to the data, and exemplified participant's ability to reflect, and in some cases these after thoughts influenced some of the emerging themes.

This study was my first experience of using in-depth, semi-structured interviews as a method of data generation. As I conducted the interviews I became more comfortable asking probing questions, and asking the participants to define and clarify some of their comments.

Videotape Observations

With two of the participants, a stationary video camera was set up and used to record the observed teaching session. The use of a video camera for observation provided a significant extra data-generating tool to enable further exploration of tentative themes that had emerged from the interviews and observations. A time to meet immediately after this session was arranged, with the location determined by the participant, so that there was an opportunity for the participant to view the video, and to comment and reflect on the content and their responses to certain situations. The content of the video per se was not used as data. I noted comments and observed the participant as they watched and controlled the video replay. The participants had the ability to pause and comment or replay a scene with the remote control. When a scene or event that I thought was of interest appeared I requested the participant to pause the video and share their thoughts about their performance. The main purpose of both forms of observation was to observe how exemplary teachers articulated their own performance. In the case of one of the participants, the video recall affected her emotionally. This reinforced to

me the view of Haggerty (1998) that a researcher needs to be alert to the potential affective impact on participants when using video feedback, and the possibility of an individual suffering detrimental effects.

Participant Observations

Each participant was observed in his or her classroom for one teaching period. I was a non-participant, taking observation notes during each session. This proved to be challenging, due to the dual roles I had to undertake with the two participants who were videoed – tracking and videoing the movement of the teachers and writing observation notes at the same time was difficult. It was noticeable in one class that was videoed, that my presence affected the behaviour of some members of the class. After each observation, I was able to have an immediate conversation with the participant, to allow me to clarify aspects of what I had observed and to enable them to comment on the lesson and their performance.

Group Interview

After some initial data analysis, the participants were invited to meet as a group to discuss and reflect on their perspectives on performance. A stationary video camera recording was made to assist the identification of who was talking, and the expression used in voice tone and movement. This group interview lasted approximately 1.5 hours. I prompted the participants on four occasions to generate conversation: initially they were asked to introduce themselves, part way through I asked them to share a memorable moment, I interrupted discussion to invite them to share how they felt about

one of these moments, and at the end of the session, and I asked them for a brief summary statement about what performance meant to them. Responses from participants to each other reinforced earlier themes and perspectives on performance, yet also provided further insights from some of the participants: what they enjoyed and were passionate about, what was important to them, challenges, ideas for improvement, leadership, curriculum and teaching methods, relationships with students and colleagues. This sharing of ideas generated new, rich data.

Data Analysis

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested that qualitative data analysis was an intuitive and inductive process. The reading of the pilot interview transcripts enabled an initial analysis and trial coding of data. Categories, themes, and patterns were identified, and this assisted with defining parameters, determining method of data generation, actual questions asked and techniques for the actual participant study. It was a dynamic and creative process, enabling a deeper understanding of the topic of study, and the refinement of my own interpretation of the phenomenon of performance.

Following data analysis techniques as described by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996), emerging themes, conversation topics, vocabulary, recurring activities, and feelings, were identified and listed. Initially, categories within themes were coded and then on re-reading transcripts, letters were used to allocate words or phrases to these codes.

Assigning these different words or phrases to thematic categories was achieved by carefully thinking about how participants used their language in the different contexts being discussed around their perspectives on performance. This resulted in the specific examples being identified to enable comparison and similarities, both for an individual participant's perspective in different generating methods, and when looking at another participant's perspectives. This led to segmenting data using categories, which enabled different levels of complexity to be explored, and influenced the themes of the findings chapters.

After the completion of the first two participant interviews further data analysis was conducted, helping guide future interview questions and the group interview direction. This involved listening to the transcript tapes, rereading transcripts and experimenting with different coding techniques. Being a qualitative study, this developing sense of what the study was all about and combining insight and intuition, led to what Taylor and Bogdan (1998) called an "intimate familiarity with the data" (p.142).

The numbering method changed after the initial analysis of the first two transcripts. I felt it to be more effective to consider each transcript other ways without number coding, similar to what Coffey and Atkinson (1996) described. Firstly, what participants said in phrases or paragraphs was summarised. Secondly, original categories and new emerging ones from these summaries were noted and explored further to generate meaning. This led to participants' perspectives revealing initial key themes: relationships, influences, self-motivation to perform, performance expectations, self-concept, effective teaching, and personal attributes. These themes were used as the basis of extensive mind maps for each participant, and specific phrases from transcript

summaries were assigned back to these themes and noted as branches on the maps. The participants' perspectives were then electronically cut and pasted from transcripts and collated in two different ways. In the first method, a theme was identified, and then perspectives were collated categorically for individual participants. The second method replaced method one after analysing three themes. I felt that the two remaining themes were so much more substantial that it required a different intuitive based approach. In the second method, a participant was chosen; their perspectives were collated under themes, and then put into categories. The transcript of interviews, observations, and video recalls were then further scrutinised and when perspectives were used in the findings chapters, they were highlighted and coded. This part of the analysis assisted to identify common and different perspectives in themes, and also provided a check for repetition. As the mind maps were completed for each participant the shape and groupings of the themes changed.

Summary

A qualitative research design was chosen to allow the participants to describe their perspectives on performance. This recognised that there are multiple realities and each individual may perceive, articulate, and enact performance in different ways. The use of a phenomenological approach, through multiple ways of interpreting experiences, enabled me to explore each participant's perspective on performance, and produced an interpretation of this reality that was useful in understanding the whole person.

Five teachers were interviewed and observed. Two were videoed, and a group interview concluded the data generation phase. All the interviews were transcribed verbatim, with

the information organised within the context of the study and in comparison to relevant literature. The coding and processing of data exemplified the richness, complexity and range of participant's attitudes, values and perspectives on performance. The methods used allowed the participants to describe their perspectives on performance in an open and enlightening way, thus successfully gaining entry into their conceptual world.

Introduction

The analysis of the data revealed that the five participants described and enacted the notion of performance within four key conceptual themes: their relationships with and the influence of people, their strong self-concept of who they were as individuals, their desire and ability to reflect on their performance and renew themselves, and their high expectations of themselves and others.

This chapter summarises the first set of findings of this study and compares these findings to the literature significant to personal and professional relationships, and the influences these had on participants' performance. Participants indicated that their professional practice and concept of performance were an essential part of wider life concerns. Their previous life experiences and background helped shape their view of teaching, and concepts like performance, in their practice. Strong and sometimes long lasting relationships have developed in their lives through influential people or role models. Charlotte encapsulated the thoughts and perspectives of all participants when she said,

“The kids, the relationship and teaching is the heart of it. The ability to create relationships with people is crucial to both teaching in the classroom and managing a school. Your ability to connect with people is crucial to every aspect of your performance.”

Ross endorsed how important relationships with people are in a wider sense, whether at school or in the community, when he said, “ultimately teaching and learning is a human personal activity.”

This connection was evident in Hay McBer (2002) who outlined that respect for others underpins everything outstanding teachers do. They explicitly value others, value diversity, and retain respect in their relationships, even in challenging times. The strength of relationships were apparent among motivated teachers in Sederberg and Clark (1990) in that they had an intense desire to replicate the high level of performance by other teachers whom they had formed a relationship with and had played significant roles in their own educational and personal development. This importance of respect in teacher and student relationships was highlighted in Collinson (1999). Respect is a vital foundation for students’ best learning and a prerequisite for effective teaching.

The Influence of Family

Three of the participants described attributes of parents and in one case a grandparent, and how they perceived themselves to be similar to them. Participants expressed a deep respect for these members of their families, how they felt they had to maintain traditions of high expectations, and described how their teaching and wider view of people was influenced by them. Charlotte said, “Dad was a wonderful, articulate public speaker, had an outgoing personality and taught us not to be afraid to challenge authority. I’m very much like my father.” Natalie said, “They’re very proud and pleased that I’m living up to their expectations. I think very highly of both of them.” Sharon stated, “I think it has got a lot to do with the way you have been brought up, and I think my

parents expectations of me were always high.” McKay (1997) also noted that teachers were strongly influenced in their attitudes, values and beliefs about teaching, primarily by their parents.

Sharon, Natalie and Charlotte all remembered their parents as hard working, and at times tough in ensuring expectations were met. Sharon recalled, “Grandfather was so tough. Dad was also quite tough, and Mum had very clear boundaries.” Balancing this were indications that empathy, compassion, caring, and providing a safe, supportive, enjoyable environment were equally important. “Mother taught me empathy and feeling for other people. This is really important,” said Charlotte. Sharon said that, “My mother is really giving, and very full of warmth and nurturing.” Receiving praise, living in a home environment where education and learning were valued, where as individuals they grew and developed confidence, were important influences. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) found, in their study of quality teachers, that being successful, secure, and confident in their professionalism could be derived from teachers receiving encouraging comments from parents.

Influential Teachers

All participants were influenced significantly during their schooling and teaching careers by at least one teacher. These teachers that were inspirational, respected for their content knowledge and expectations, could relate well, and genuinely cared personally and for what they could achieve, were the ones that influenced them. For Ross and Sharon, these teachers influenced them during their careers in a professional development environment, whereas the others established relationships during their

schooling years. “He was the best, just brilliant. He’s visual, interactive,” Ross said of his favourite teacher. “Just incredible”, stated Sharon. “She was an amazing teacher, so inspirational, and she loved her subject,” said Charlotte. “They were a fantastic bunch of teachers who have all gone on to do other things since”, recalled Shane. “I can remember teachers who really made a difference and I guess part of that was really relating at a personal level to people - they were real”, Natalie said. For all participants, as in Sederberg and Clark (1990), teacher role models had shaped a sustained pattern of performance during their teaching career to date.

Mutual respect and responding to the challenges these teachers gave them nurtured their enthusiasm and passion to learn. “I really respected the lecturers that came in and challenged my ideas and were able to share fresh experiences”, said Natalie. Natalie, Shane and Charlotte were each influenced by a teacher who made a difference and who, “constantly drove you hard”, “challenged me”, “was one of those formidable but inspirational teachers”. They accepted the challenges but it was not always easy. As Shane said, “it was a huge culture shock”, when faced with a teacher that provided structure and direction, yet participants concurred that this learning environment was based on the notion that a student was, “set for success.”

All participants connected well with these influential teachers. Through respect and knowing they could achieve success, in some cases, long lasting relationships were established. “They took an interest in what you were doing. They’d listen, make it fun, be positive, and smile,” said Natalie. “He just really clicked with me,” said Ross. Sharon talked about being fortunate and privileged to have had amazing influences, “I was so very, very lucky he was so interested in me.” These perspectives are reflective of

Lowman (1996), who claimed that individuals that were engaging, motivating, and supportive, had a significant influence on exemplary teachers. Relationships were enhanced as the participants thoroughly enjoyed the memorable experiences shared with these teachers.

Important Professional Colleagues

All participants described a relationship with a principal that they had a connection with or had influenced them, and this connection provided motivation for them to perform. “One of the keys for me is having a Principal who will let you be innovative, will enable you and provide you with the resources to try it and allow you to take risks – he trusted me”, said Sharon. “My new Principal is visionary, so exciting to work with. I wanted to work with someone who was the type of Principal I want to be so I can learn a lot from him,” said Charlotte. Charlotte also talked about how approachable her Principal was, as this enabled connections to be made. The result she claimed was that his style of leadership empowered people, and this was great for both the students and staff at the school as it, “liberated the talent of all.” Natalie held the view that a leader who had vision and created opportunities for her to take up on an idea, with initially no restrictions, and enabled her to “dream it”, was someone she wanted to work with. Sergiovanni (1991) recognised the importance of vision and principal leadership in commenting that, “the vision of a school must also reflect the hopes and dreams, the needs and interests, and the values and beliefs of everyone who has a stake in the school – teachers, parents, and students” (p. 135). It was apparent that all participants in this study saw leadership with such purpose as key to their performance.

Ross's strong professional respect for his Principal was exemplified when he said that his Principal listened, acknowledged expertise he didn't have, but also enabled Ross to "have room to move and to use my own judgement." Shane enjoyed the collegiality of the working relationship with his Principal, and the recognition and responsibility she gave him. In return, he aimed to be obliging, and respectful of the need for accountability in making sure his performance was to the satisfaction of the principal.

Team Culture

Participants had a deep mutual respect for their peers, a high regard for other people's talent, and a unanimous view that high performance could only be generated in a supportive environment, where ideas are shared and developed and enthusiasm is generated together. Natalie indicated that she thrived as a teacher within a team culture. She said, "I really value team work, working together within a supportive environment, and being able to work with other teachers at the same time". Charlotte presented the view that, "I really enjoy a team approach and people are fun. And I think the most effective things happen as a team in a democracy." In support of the relevance of relationships in teams, Hargreaves (1997) noted that how teachers work with teachers affects how well they work with students.

"I love working with teams of teachers and trying new things. Then if they work, bringing other people on board and enthusing them about it," said Sharon. However, Sharon also had performance linked to a clear process in her mind when she added that, "I like to set a direction, then everyone comes in and we all move together." Similarly, Mazany (1995) highlighted that for a high performing team, it was important to set the

right principles in place at the start. Explicit intentions, and the culture and management style that would be adopted, needed to be clearly outlined before support was sought. Mazany suggested that this highly interactive approach to team building was so important to build strong and positive relationships among the people involved.

Charlotte also talked about enjoying working with people that challenge ideas, working with team dynamics, and the diversity this brings: “ they seek excellence and they are passionate about what they do and I like working with people who are like that about their teaching.” Ross acknowledged that other members of his department, “shared a passion to communicate to one another”, and that “its really hard to fire on your own”. He enjoyed the “contagious enthusiasm” generated by younger members of his department, and “would love to inspire teachers” in a teacher education environment. Shane found it quite “refreshing” to be in a team where cooperative planning and the sharing of ideas or strategies in an open forum could happen.

All participants said that they enjoyed building team spirit, so that people in their department or syndicate felt part of the team, could identify with it, and were proud of what the team was doing to support students in achieving their full potential, as learners and in life. Hay McBer (2002) listed these aspects of teamwork as being attributes of outstanding teachers.

Orientation toward Students

Participants’ perspectives on relationships with students appeared to provide the most memorable and rewarding aspects of performance, in and out of the classroom. Shane

summed up a powerful common theme with all participants when he said that, “the experiences I endeavour to provide for students and the resulting relationships that are established, are the springboard to learning for life.” When creating experiences for students, the teachers in a study by Woods and Jeffrey (cited in Hargreaves, 1997) also aimed to generate classroom relationships that featured interest, enthusiasm, inquiry, excitement, discovery, risk-taking, and fun.

Creating a safe, supportive, yet challenging environment for these relationships to be established, nurtured and developed, was a strong aspect of participants’ perspectives. There was an overall awareness of balance in the teacher-student relationship. Collinson (1999) outlined how these relationships could potentially set up barriers, blocking the approachability that was so necessary for making students feel comfortable and secure in the classroom. Shane said he aimed to teach in a learning environment that was “safe, where students can take a risk without feeling that they’re going to be shot down. I’d like to think that I’m positive and encourage them to try something, as opposed to doing whatever I say.” By placing the responsibility on students, he felt it challenged them to prove to themselves and others that, in order to succeed, everyone had to work as a team. He tried to generate a “community” feel. Charlotte’s statements included a reference to the value of encouragement to students, when establishing relationships. She said, “I think it’s important you give reinforcement back when students give, offer information in class, so that they feel comfortable with hands off, and that you give positive reinforcement.” Charlotte said she could relate to this, as a class had recently challenged her, when her “mana”, which associated with strong mutual respect, had to be established before the relationship with the class could be developed. Collinson (1999) noted that exemplary teachers seem to create, from the first day of classes, an

atmosphere of mutual respect with reciprocal but differing responsibilities and rights. Charlotte described establishing a relationship with this class as a very tough situation, when she had to continually draw on her own inner strength as to the value of relationships. She said, "I guess part of good teaching is wanting to be able to assist students to make those connections and not just settling for surviving in the classroom." Charlotte claimed she was honest and open with her students, but also said that she was humble enough to admit that occasionally she couldn't meet the ideal of doing her best, an ideal she also asked of her students. This was a perspective on performance that exemplary teachers in Collinson (1999) also role modelled.

Natalie liked the idea of "reinforcement along the way – guiding, having fun, and celebrating success." She was "always ready to listen." In order to provide a safe and supportive relationship building, learning environment,

"I get at their level and relate to them in a positive way but at the same time, I treat them like an equal rather than talk down to a student. I think if a student is keen on something then they wanted to go with that idea you've got to make the most of that, you can't squash it."

Ross challenged his students to, "commit themselves. I don't want them to sit there". He admitted that there is a risk, (that all participants acknowledged,) that in creating a safe, supportive, challenging environment in which you want students to excel and perform, you open yourself up to running with whatever the students come up with. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) suggested that the abilities of teachers enhanced this prospect of experimentation and risk-taking. Participants in this study claimed they were confident in their ability to manage this risk. All participants felt that establishing strong, positive,

respectful relationships with students, yet still providing boundaries, could be the key to successful learning and performance, when the student is self-motivated to learn themselves through enquiry and involvement. Ross expanded;

“If you choose to work interactively with kids you cannot predict where you will finish up necessarily at the end of the day or how far you’ll happen to get, because there’ll be the teachable moment and you make a decision on the spot whether you run with that or not.”

Sharon, when linking boundaries and relationships said,

“I can be really, really tough, but still be nurturing. I think that it’s really important because I think students need very clear firm boundaries and if they don’t have that they really don’t know where they stand and they become quite problematic, but they also need to know that you really care and that you love them. I think that the two can go together.”

Sharon expressed a genuine concern for the behaviour, achievement and emotional well being of individual students. Sederberg and Clark (1990) also identified that any teacher or school must never lose sight of the human interaction dimension in the teaching-learning process.

Sharon, like all other participants, informed the students that she is also a learner, and this became another key part of the relationship building. Collinson (1999) discussed this in the context of teachers themselves having a disposition towards continuous learning, in order to improve learning for students. Sharon said,

“I give them opportunity to do things that I may not even be able to do myself. I share that I may have to learn too, so I’m not inhibiting them and their

performance because I can't do something. I'm a learner with the students or I tell them about my learning."

Sharon encouraged risk taking but support was still there in her relationship with students, as indicated by her statement that, "the ones that can't initially succeed, they know that we can work together if mistakes are made and it doesn't work."

With the students open to learning and feeling comfortable to express themselves both verbally and in other media within their learning environment, relationships could be further enhanced. Participants all acknowledged this stage of relationship building. "They all know what's on and what's not", said Shane, and he claimed that the students respond favourably to him as if the rules were a reward. Charlotte said, "Engagement is crucial. If you don't connect with the students in the classroom you may as well not be there. They don't have to like you but you need to be able to reach them, create a response." In her view, mutual respect had to be established.

The classroom environment was important to relationships for all participants. "A comfortable relaxed classroom is crucial to learning. It is important for the student to feel free to take risks and make mistakes. Students learn best in this atmosphere and it encourages a team approach," Charlotte stated. Shane commented that his students, after being part of setting up ground rules for the class, told him that they "assumed that we followed the teacher's instructions and didn't see that it needed to be negotiated. They just all assumed it happened, they're pretty straightforward about it, and they're very good about it." Natalie said,

"I love the idea of giving students choice in how they will do something. This enables to a certain extent the students to have more control of the process. I

then don't have problems with getting students up to speed and that sort of thing. They know that they are going to be in for a good year for some good experiences, if they toe the line."

Ross said,

"It allows involvement and people got the chance to chip in. You can now put that activation energy in, get a heap back, bounce off that and almost feed off it. It's a two-way thing and interaction is very important in teaching. So to me the order is control, respect and then personal relating".

When this environment was evident, Ross said he was then prepared to let go, and the lesson, if he performed well, would be significantly driven by, "where the students have concerns, where they're at, and what their needs are". His role changed to "almost constant monitoring and adjusting" until the students themselves determined their own level of performance. The shift to being an individual, student centred approach to learning, in a collective setting through relationship building, was recognised in Ramsay and Oliver (1995). Students in their study had become independent learners and researchers, constantly offering creative solutions to problems, secure in the knowledge that their ideas would be respected and valued. Ramsay and Oliver commented further that there was fun and excitement in these classrooms.

Ross described an aspect of student relationships that was unique amongst the participants. He stated that although he felt he had an excellent relationship with students and that the verbal interaction crucial to his performance, and which he fed off, was to him very apparent in his classroom, he also said,

"I don't think scientists ever know students well. When it comes to write reports at the end of the year you suddenly realise how little you know about them

because they don't give away much of themselves in terms of the values they hold. In English they are able to write essays that give away a lot of yourself, but when writing about bonding or reactions in chemistry, you never give away anything of yourself."

In particular, Ross talked about students in his class of a different culture from the mainly European students and how he was, "only slowly getting to know them". Collinson (1999) commented on how exemplary teachers share and gain knowledge of students through dialogue and questions, reflecting Ross' challenge. Written dialogues are more overt, but they also demand respect for confidentiality and privacy. Collinson (1999) also found that caring teachers make a point of always providing a safety net for students. Teachers' reasoning for fostering dialogue is to find out what students think, so that teachers can push students' learning further. Ross said, "it was a pity" that he was unable to have this deeper relationship with students.

Sharon introduced and outlined the concept of 'feed forward', as a tool to build relationships and improve performance. She summarised it thus:

"This idea of really specific praise and giving students feedback as well as feed forward is something that I've learned this year. They know that you know where they're up to and they know that they're there to learn and you're really explicit about what you're working on, so they know exactly what to do."

In Hay McBer (2002), outstanding teachers used their ability to impact and influence students to perform, but like Sharon, they went further in their use of indirect influence, with and through others, to bring about positive educational outcomes. Sharon claimed that this worked as a strong influence on relationships with students and how they

engaged with learning. This perspective reiterates what all the participants said about relationships and enabling students to take the lead themselves.

Summary

Participants' perspectives on performance had been shaped by early relationships in their lives, as well as their own caring disposition and a sense of social responsibility. As Shane stated, "you must know the kids damn well. As teachers, we have a social responsibility". Participants claimed to understand that they needed to maximise opportunities anywhere to learn to know students, to establish and build a relationship. Participant's experiences and interactions with family, educators, and students have influenced them strongly. Sharon said: "I just love the teaching part, I love working with teams of teachers, what I love the most is the relationship with the students, the teachers and the parents, I love the idea of thinking together and moving forward." These interactions were formal and informal, sometimes planned, but often spontaneous. The participants claimed that knowing students and their capabilities allowed them to individually and realistically challenge all students to learn. A climate of mutual respect was established and then expected in relationships, along with the ultimate goal of bringing out the best in students through their high expectations of their own performance.

Introduction

Participants in the study revealed strong self-conceptual knowledge of who they were as individuals. With this strength, participants felt that, in addition to establishing and nurturing relationships with students, they were able to “ignite student’s dedication to eternal questioning and continuous improvement” (Van Schaack and Glick, 1982, p. 32). “It is important to me to be passionate about what I do and believe in it,” said Charlotte, and this statement reflected the perspectives of all participants. Their perspectives also reflected a study of exemplary teachers in Collinson (1994), who talked about the importance of modelling desirable behaviour, values, and dispositions that are part of who they are. Shane said, “I don’t see values as separate from what you’re modelling to students.” When examining performance and a teacher’s self-concept, Stone (1987) claimed that there is a relationship between the self of the teacher and effective teaching.

Success, total commitment, and responsibility towards student learning are commonplace self-conceived effectiveness or performance criteria for exemplary teachers. Collinson (1996b) used intrapersonal knowledge as a key part of a triad of knowledge for becoming an exemplary teacher and summarised an ethic of care being present when a teacher was caring, compassionate, respectful for self and others, understanding of self and others, and gave to and received from others. Intrapersonal knowledge was something that the excellent teachers in a study by Collinson (1996b) consistently mentioned as they worked towards developing themselves, and caring for

others. Another component of Collinson's (1996b) intrapersonal knowledge was work ethic, and she claimed this was present in a teacher when there was pride in effort, dedication, perseverance, and courage. These concepts have provided a useful framework for this chapter, which aims to summarise findings that reflect participants' beliefs and values, and their self-concept, and compare these to the literature relevant to an ethic of care and work ethic, which all participants discussed.

Care and Faith

Sharon stated, "being interested in students and believing in them" was an essential element of good teaching, and in sharing perspectives on her relationship with students, caring and loving were "so important" to her. All students can learn and more will learn if educators are able to provide a supportive caring environment that will nurture hearts as well as minds (Osterman & Freese, 2000; Ramsay & Oliver, 1995). This deep-seated purpose of caring about the whole person was evident in each of the participants' perspectives on performance.

The caring, counselling aspects of a relationship with a student appealed to Charlotte, and she said she enjoyed the challenge this brought to her ability to enable students to perform: "I ask myself - how I can help this student reach his goals and show I care". Charlotte told the story of a boy with low academic ability and who needed a lot of reinforcement on anything he achieved. Ross too, was motivated to perform by caring about the potential achievement of students, and questioned whether he had done his best to enable success: "I care about the achievement of students - the learning wasn't as sharp as it should've been in one way or another. And I guess, deep down, I was a bit disappointed in that". Although these perspectives referred to caring in the context of

academic performance, Ross' genuine concern for others was strongly exemplified by his statement: "I used to be able to give a student a hug. The world's changed – students need hugs now more than ever. Things have changed a lot." A similar deep genuine concern for students from teachers was noted in Van Schaack and Glick (1982) when teachers enabled students to feel important as individuals. Both Charlotte and Ross commented on their strong religious faith and caring for others, and this was reinforced when Ross said, "I do care about scripture". Each superlative teacher in Van Schaack and Glick (1982) also had a strong personal faith, which helped sustain them through their daily living.

Shane and Natalie expressed that they care about the need to include ways for individual students to achieve and progress to improve their performance, without losing confidence when it might appear they are not doing their best. Natalie said, "I get a little bit worried about modelling that I'm not going to direct them in a path I thought of that will enable them to reach their goals, and that something else might be just as good". Shane stated that, "It's all about caring for students, supporting and encouraging them - not putting them down because they can't understand. I don't like to see students give up and I don't like them seeing them unsure". This connectedness between caring and learning was common amongst participants' perspectives. Collinson (1999) found that exemplary teachers did not in fact differentiate between an ethic of care and learning. In agreement, Osterman and Freese (2000) commented that caring was linked with high academic standards and accomplishments and was essential to the learning process.

Compassion

When describing their personal concern for both the achievement of students and the emotional well being of individual students, all participants expressed that leniency in terms of student behaviour and effort, consistent niceness or being perpetually agreeable, were not effective when considering performance. “I’d like to be tough, but I’d like to think I’m fair and I’ve got a compassionate side as well”, said Natalie. Natalie’s perspective was also reflected in teacher’s views in Osterman and Freese (2000). There needed to be a secure base of expectations before students felt safe and would take a risk with their learning, and all participants discussed the importance of this, and reflected on their own expectations. Sharon, reinforced her earlier comment concerning caring and loving when she said, “I feel like sometimes I can be really, really tough but still have that nurturing and warmth”. Charlotte framed the value of compassion around knowing the whole child, stating: “so much of our teaching is not just in the classroom but around their whole lives”. She told of how knowing the home situation of a boy, and his history, would sometimes determine how she managed his behaviour and gave him support. Charlotte continued, “I’m trying to manage that boy in a gentler but firm manner because he has the potential to be extremely physically aggressive”. When dealing with such behaviour, Collinson (1999) found that teachers showed respect for students as human beings, even if the student’s behaviour was unacceptable.

Self-esteem

All participants described themselves as being respectful, considerate and understanding of others within relationships. The perspectives of participants in this study also

indicated a high degree of self-awareness and the effect of performance on participants' self-esteem. "I felt like I really had to prove myself and really establish myself", said Sharon when describing her arrival at a new school. "It was just real affirmation that you're doing a good job, they appreciate what you're doing and you're on the right track", declared Natalie, when referring to having discussions with parents after an outdoor education experience that had been very successful. "A bit of recognition like that is quite nice", said Ross acknowledging his receipt of the teaching award. Shane described the effect an early teaching influence had on his understanding of himself: "You did all the things for self-esteem: positives, you can do it, prove to me you can do it, why doesn't it work, and it gave you the chance to have some direction". Shane claimed that this aspect of performance was not academic, it was how he felt about himself, how people treated him, and having the ability to take a risk. He stated that he aimed to mirror this ethic of care in the classroom. Sharon continued the theme of understanding and learning about herself, when she said, "I've done a huge lot of learning this year. It's been really great, and a real challenge but I feel really satisfied with what I've learned and what I'm able to do with the students". How effective teachers judge themselves to be in a given teaching situation is a form of self-efficacy, according to Alderman (1999). Alderman further deduced that a teacher's sense of self-efficacy was found to be one of the best predictors of an increase in student achievement. Ross stated: "I probably don't learn as much new stuff as I should", when expecting more of himself and caring about his own understanding of material so that his students could benefit. Christine completed a self-conceptual analysis when she said, "I'd make an effective head of faculty in that real empathy with people and your leadership comes, it's natural it's not an artificial thing, it comes from within".

Respect for Peers

Participants' perspectives indicated strong mutual respect for peers. "I know there are so many incredible teachers around", said Sharon. Reflecting Sharon's perspective, Sederberg and Clark (1990) found that high vitality teachers long for collegial relationships. Interacting with and subsequently appreciating their colleagues refreshed their thirst to learn more.

The participants in this study observed many other potential exemplary teachers during the teaching award process. They expressed a curiosity by assessing the knowledge and ability of others. In a caring and complimentary way, they then compared this new data bank of knowledge with other teaching peers. "In my mind there were a lot of very talented people around me doing great stuff", said Natalie. "There are a lot of other very good excellent teachers here as well", said Charlotte. "I can think of plenty of other people it could have gone to", claimed Shane. Ross, during the group interview, complemented Sharon who had described a situation where she claimed she had made a considerable impact on a student and this was recognised by the student several years later. He said, "really special, so often you are the link in the chain and its beaut to see the chain further on – so often you don't. You never see the finished product – its neat." Ramsay and Oliver (1995) also argued that quality teachers were able to interact meaningfully with colleagues.

Respect for Others

Being empathetic was not confined to relationships with students. Charlotte revealed that by being in her new management role and experiencing the resulting frustrations of not having her own classroom and readily available resources, it “helps me manage other staff, as it gives me an understanding of what it’s like.” All participants expressed a high level of respect for other people. Zehm and Kottler (1993) suggested that a teacher who demonstrated respect for individuals accepted others. This required a great degree of tolerance, sensitivity, and cultural awareness.

Natalie’s perspective was that respect was very personal in that she didn’t wish to hurt people: “I don’t like upsetting people or offending them. I like to stay on the right side”. Sharon declared a similar thought: “I like the idea of people being in dialogue with each other and really seeking meaning from each other so you’re not pulling people apart”. Shane said, “supporting and encouraging other people are important - don’t put them down”, and specifically in his classroom, “you can’t bring grief of an adult level to students”. Ross’ perspectives indicated that, in ensuring that performance was being achieved in his classroom, students had the opportunity to be part of consensus decision-making. Ross said, “it’s all about setting them up to enable them to make good choices”. Ross felt that respect and trust were required so that students could make these decisions in the best interests of their own learning.

Sharon talked about one of the school environments she had experience in, which reinforced her respect for others: “It was very person based and believing in each other, looking out for each other, standing behind each other, and being a real caring

environment – I think this is so important”. In highlighting respect for other cultures, Sharon also talked about some of her students and parents: “They have the most incredible priority for education. The students have an amazing inner discipline, and a real thirst to learn. There is a real expectation from their parents”. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) supported the idea that ethnic sensitivity meant that people from minority groups felt at home with teachers. Charlotte also acknowledged the different backgrounds of parents and students, and respected their right to achieve and perform along with everyone else when she said that, “social quality and social justice are really important.” Such belief was discussed in Hargreaves (2003) when he described how teachers must help students develop the character that promotes involvement in the community, with the objective of cultivating a disposition of sympathy and care for other nations and cultures. Participants in this study claimed they valued the viewpoints of others, were always prepared to listen, and respected and placed importance on differences. As Ross said, “it’s what sort of people they are that is more important.”

Giving to Others

Participants in this study claimed that they gave of themselves a great deal, at times beyond the expected call of duty. Natalie stated that she liked to make people happy, to strive to “give people what they need”. She also took an extra-curricular activity for a previous school voluntarily as she saw the immense value to the growth and personal development of the students. “There’s no payment for that, it’s something I love doing”, she declared. In examining relationships that went beyond the teaching of students, Osterman and Freese (2000) found that caring teachers showed consideration and understanding.

Sharon had a perspective on giving in a team context: “Getting behind a person who makes others fizz and rise”. This, she claimed, enabled her to show that she cared for that person and would support them, but also that the performance of the team could be improved. Charlotte talked about how important the appraisal of teachers was to improving performance, but also saw the value and necessity to serve her appraisees, to maximise their performance. She said, “I ask myself - how I can help a person I’m appraising maybe reach their goals”. Ross also reflected philosophically on the concept of caring and giving when he commented that, “Giving freely to each other used to be the norm – the basis of good education”. Shane, in the spirit of giving and serving others said, “I want to help students succeed”.

Work Ethic

Exemplary teachers in this study revealed that they see their caring disposition as being associated with hard work. Charlotte said,

“Well it’s demanding, incredibly demanding on your time, but rewarding in terms of the relationships that you establish with young people, seeing particularly at risk young people going through problems and making progress through it and coming out the other side”.

“It’s a lot of blood, sweat and tears but I get pretty good outcomes”, said Shane. Participants stated that they took pride in their efforts, and said they are firmly in the belief that their dedication and determination, along with a perpetual, enthusiastic, optimistic outlook, will make a difference both to the students and to themselves. Natalie said, “I love putting all that extra effort in along the way so that they’re going to get that real sense of achievement in the end”.

Building relationships, success, total commitment, and responsibility towards student learning were offered as important perspectives on performance by participants. To be effective, Sederberg and Clark (1990) and Stone (1987) noted that dedication, genuine caring for others, and innovation are common attributes of exemplary teachers. Lowman (1996) suggested that exemplary teachers are those who create positive, everlasting memories of learning and are positive in their disposition. Sharon commented, "I feel really satisfied with what I've learned and what I'm able to do with the students."

Collinson (1994; 1999), Ramsay and Oliver (1995), and McKay (1997) identified intellectual excitement as one of the characteristics of exemplary teachers. Ross, after trying a certain way of teaching that enabled the students to clearly show they understood concepts, stated: "It was great. Wonderful. I'll do it again".

Commitment

Shane said that one of his own indicators of performance was, "being committed to the job, the students and what you have in mind for them". He continued, "I want to see them succeed and I want them to see that they can succeed and feel success". Natalie said one of her performance criteria was, "putting time and dedication into the background work, so that it works well". She also showed commitment and dedication by commenting on the importance of, "putting in a lot of effort for the benefit and a real sense of achievement of the kids". Natalie recognised that perseverance and determination were required to realise achievement, as exemplified when planning and developing an outside the classroom experience: "Although incredibly challenging,

knowing it was going to be wonderful kept me going. It was really good and I don't tend to give up on things like that." She had been through difficult times in this situation, and made hard choices along the way, yet Natalie claimed she was committed to reach a goal that had real meaning to her life. Collinson (1996b) noted that such determination and perseverance was observable in exemplary teachers. When confronted with a situation in a class that was unfamiliar to him, Shane showed admirable determination when he said: "I thought, right, I'm not giving up on it just because of that". The same expectations were placed on his students, when he said, "I don't like to see people give up, I don't like to see students give up and I don't like them to see themselves unsure". "Don't give up on things that you are passionate about", was the advice Natalie gave to students.

Doing Your Best, Enthusiastically

Charlotte said, "One of the most important facets of being a good teacher is seeking excellence". Shane said, "you give your very best", and Ross, "you've got to get it right". A desire to do one's best permeates throughout participants' perspectives. They cared about their performance. To support this, Collinson (1996b) found that when exemplary teachers were learning about themselves and reflecting, they were often self-critical and continually challenging themselves to make things better.

All participants in this study shared the belief that every student could succeed. Sharon's positive attitude to this strong belief was summed up when she said: "Attitude and work can move mountains." By bringing out the best in themselves and people around them, exemplary teachers not only hold expectations of themselves as part of

their work ethic, but encourage reciprocal expectations by those they form relationships with (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 2000). To ensure that challenges and possible setbacks were not seen as failures, rather as important opportunities to learn, participants were optimistic and upbeat in their perspectives about moments when things were not necessarily going in the way they had planned. “I was giving particular encouragement to these students because I’d had work back from them that indicated really low self esteem so I was giving them positive feedback to things that they had done that were good”, said Charlotte.

Shane said that he role modelled, “trying to work problems out in a positive way” when encouraging his students. Natalie argued, “keeping life on the positives is really important and I try and make sure that’s happening in the class.” The exemplary teachers in Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000), despite complexities, frustrations, and setbacks, also managed to remain hopeful. Sharon’s perspective on performance when coping with change highlights her positive outlook to life: “It’s about dealing with and managing change really positively in your life. It’s great to reflect on how you deal with change because it just happens all the time, and if you can go with it, it’s just so much easier.”

Ross tried to engender enthusiasm and a positive, passionate disposition by the language he used when interacting with students: “that is awesome”, “that is big time”, “that is really special”. Ross also said, “I love teaching. Nothing can replace an impassioned teacher.” Charlotte talked about how “passion and enthusiasm” was key to performance, and this she said was reflected in her work ethic and general life. Charlotte explained:

“I love people. I love being with people and ideas and learning, socialising, having a good laugh.”

Summary

An ethic of being caring, compassionate, respectful of self and others, understanding of self and others, and giving to and receiving from others, was evident in participants' perspectives. A work ethic of pride in effort, dedication, perseverance, doing one's best, and an optimistic, passionate, hopeful outlook to achievement and success, were identified in participants' perspectives. Participants in this study claimed that exemplary performance was evident when these attitudes were present.

There was no room for complacency among participants concerning a caring environment, and expectations for both themselves and students were very high. This was reinforced in Hay McBer (2002) where effective teachers were seen to provide challenge and support – a tough, caring environment. The teachers studied by Hay McBer not only catered for student's needs for physical and emotional safety but, crucially, repeatedly expressed positive expectations and built pupil's esteem and belief they could succeed, as learners and in life. All participants stated how important compassion was in seeking excellence and performing with a sense of pride. It is an inner passion and strong belief that all participants share that leaves a powerful impression.

Introduction

Participants in this study saw connecting, listening, and reflecting laying the foundation for seeing teaching and learning in entirety. By adhering to the process of reflection, information could be properly assimilated, new beginnings imagined and coherent visions formed. Sharon articulated this view when she said: “Performance I think is initially about vision and I think it’s about being able to see where you want to be with certain things”. Cammock (2001) claimed that the importance of reflection on performance was well recognised in all areas of human activity. Reinforcing this, Liston and Zeichner (1990) believed that action initiated reflection, and self-reflective practice arose naturally in the work of teachers.

Sharon said that she was, “openly learning from students, working together if it doesn’t work, looking for continual self improvement.” The link between reflection and learning which was claimed to be important to participants was provided by many educational theorists, including Dewey (cited in Collinson, 1994), and Schon (1983), where learning that was dependent on integrating experience with reflection, was advocated. Dewey (cited in Tremmel, 1999, p.107) first elaborated his thinking about a reflective or inquiry process to learning through the following five steps: “a felt difficulty, its location and definition, suggestions of possible solutions, development by reasoning of the bearings of the suggestion, and further observation and experiment leading to its acceptance or rejection”. Participants in this study, as reflective teachers, claimed to need a variety of tools and employed different reflective processes, with

which they might be able to locate and articulate their own values and practices. Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, and Gass, (2000) suggested that, though theorists maintain that learning cannot take place without reflection, definitions of the reflective process vary and participant's perspectives indicated this.

Driven by their own professional growth and seeking continuous improvement self-critically in their methods and practice, the exemplary teachers in this study reflected about their own style and process. Ross's view of reflection was based around high levels of performance for both himself and his students:

“You know, at the moment I'm thinking about how I'm going to, with this class that hasn't gone so well, get them more on board and it may well be for the kids the class has gone fair enough but for me it hasn't”.

Ramsay and Oliver (1995) and Leithwood and Stager (1986) identified these individual constructs of teaching as the way quality teachers reflect critically and push themselves beyond what they think they are capable of. Teachers in Leithwood and Stager (1986) reported that, throughout their experience in teaching, a necessary change was to be more reflective in problem solving. The ability to apply what has been learned and explaining the how and why of such a process, both to themselves and to their students, appeared to be an important part of an exemplary teacher's conceptions of performance. The teachers in Leithwood and Stager had an understanding of students, and the influence they had on colleagues, was therefore enhanced.

A connection between reflection and renewal was contained in participants' perspectives. To enable this to happen, perspectives indicated participants identified problems, gathered pertinent information, analysed the facts, as they understood them,

thought about potential consequences of actions or inaction, then evaluated the results of their decision. Exemplary teachers' intrapersonal knowledge in Collinson (1999) linked the capacity for habitual and deliberate reflection to student learning, to teachers' disposition towards continuous learning and renewal. Personal renewal to Collinson implied a rekindling of enthusiasm or a replenishment of a goal or vision and participants all claimed that this is an important part of their performance. Collinson (1994) also suggested that professional renewal refers to job-related activities to enable growth, change, and learning. This chapter summarises the findings related to the significance of reflection and renewal of participants' perspectives on performance, and compares these findings to the relevant literature.

Reflection during Experience

All participants in this study have described perspectives on performance that indicated that a process of reflection was taking place during situations which tended to focus interactively on the outcomes of action, the action itself, and the intuitive knowing implicit in the action. Natalie discussed enabling students to have a positive learning experience through modelling, when she said, "I find the positive, supportive interaction generated by this learning as being one of the most satisfying things". Often this experience was spontaneous or intuitive and if this performance led to surprises, pleasing and promising or even unwanted, Schon (1983), stated that people respond by "reflection-in-action" (p.56).

Dewey (1938) was one of the first to define a process of experiential learning when he linked a careful selection of experiences with a commitment to reflection, which formed

the basis for the acquisition of new knowledge and learning, and this process was evident in participant's perspectives. The perspectives on performance of participants in this study, showed the importance of reflection in the learning process and making meaning from experiences, which characterised experiential learning. Shane specifically used the phrase experiential learning, but the meaning applied to all participants and their perspectives, when interacting with their students. Charlotte said that one of her strategies for motivating students was, "connecting or initially engaging students through the medium of language, reaching them, creating a response, but meanwhile being supportive and caring". Proudman (1992) defined experiential learning as emotionally engaged learning and like Charlotte has described, this involved critical relationships between learner and self, teacher, and learning environment. Sugerman et al (2000) claimed there was a connection between experiences, reflection, making meaning, and learning.

Ross talked about, "using real, practical examples and experiences to provide anchors to tie the stuff onto, so they can relate to these experiences, and judge for themselves whether they apply or not." Priest's (cited in Priest and Gass, 1997) paradigm of experiential learning and judgement began with a real concrete experience like Ross described and worked through to conclusion with the application of a deduced action to an unknown situation, and an evaluation of the success or failure of the application. In a similar way, Shane had previously described that he aimed to, "allow the experiences themselves to provide a springboard for learning", and be positive and encourage thinking. He stated that he preferred this process of learning to rote learning or being told what to do and aimed to role model this with students. Sharon used imagination as a form of motivation to students to enable, "students to bring any experiences they have

had into whatever they are doing”, so that they could live these experiences again and apply new knowledge.

Occurrences of Reflection

Charlotte reflected on her teaching career and possible promotion, when she said,

“I know I’m at the stage where I want to make that transition and if its not going to open up here I’ll be looking elsewhere. I don’t like just to be sitting doing the same thing for a long period of time.”

Ross, when he knew that he was going to be observed as part of this study, made sure he was prepared:

“The fact that you were coming provided some extra motivation to think and reflect about how was I going to start it, was I going to start it one way or the other way, and what would be appropriate, what would be helpful?”

Shane, when confronted and challenged with students who were resistant to learning and being disruptive to the learning of others, reflected by asking himself two key questions. First, “Have I done a good job?” and he then worked through the process of reflection, self-analysis, and thought ahead to desired outcomes and what he needed to plan for in order for these to be realised. Second, “How are the students performing”, reflecting through their response, their abilities they were demonstrating, and their application of skills. With performance in this study considered a phenomenon, Schon (1983) suggested that the practice of reflection could occur when a person is trying to deal with a phenomenon, which might be puzzling, or troubling or interesting. Schon (1983) also claimed that reflection is considered central to the art by which practitioners

sometimes deal with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness, and value conflict. In overcoming these situations, the quality teachers in Ramsay and Oliver's (1995) study used regular, systematic and ordered reflection. Shane argued that performance should encompass the whole job, and this reflection process enabled him to achieve his objective of ensuring student achievement and success. Shane's own high expectations of his own performance are further indicated when he said, "Why reflect? To make sure there's success next time round. I don't want to repeat those errors".

Natalie described a situation when, after a seminar presentation, she received some negative feedback from a member of the audience. Her thinking when reflecting on the feedback was, "I'll try and take that and try and make it improve my performance the next time. I asked myself is there something different that I should change, if there is, I have a responsibility to do so." Natalie claimed that reflection was motivated by both personal and professional expectations of a good performance.

Sharon felt challenged when she assumed a position of responsibility at a new school at which there were many experienced teachers. She wanted to make a positive impression and lead from the front:

"I always want to do things better and I had to really make myself sit back and look and watch and just take things for what they are and not try to immediately get in and change things because I think I can do them better".

Like Sharon, outstanding teachers in Hay McBer (2002), were able to analyse many more variables in such a case, and have the ability to trace many possible causes and effects, thus enabling transitions to be smooth in complex situations. Sharon also stated that, "I am now more reflective in terms of classroom practice, relationships and

collaborative leadership. I enjoy time to reflect on current educational concepts, to read and research”. She felt that sometimes, due to her desire to perform to the best of her ability, her expectations of herself were quite unrealistic but said: “I think that is just my make-up.”

A Process of Reflection

All participants described a clear reflective process as it related to their performance and its effect on students. Charlotte reflected on her performance through self, peer, and supervisory appraisal and appreciated all feedback with a positive disposition. She said of appraisal,

“I think it’s an opportunity to receive feed back on what you’re doing well and why it’s working well, and areas that you want to improve on. Also, what things need to be put in place so that you can achieve new objectives”.

Although this perspective was relevant to a formal process, Charlotte also said that, “Self-reflection and evaluation, even informal, would be a feature of the practice of most good teachers I would think.”

Sergiovanni (1991) suggested that a reflective process included a person’s theoretical knowledge, self-knowledge, craft knowledge and values. As a self determined measure of effectiveness of a decision, outcome or performance, Priest and Gass (1997) viewed “judgement” (p. 257) as a cycle of three reflective processes: inductive, deductive, and evaluative. Collinson (1996b) defined reflection as a six-step process of inquiry: “recognition of a problem, proposal of one or more hypotheses, inquiry, reasoning, decision making to resolve the problem, and evaluation of whether and how the process

could have been improved” (p. 68). Collinson also recognised the importance that judgement played in reflection.

Ross said he was honest and open with the students: “I say to the students that sometimes I don’t know whether this will work, but let’s have a go, see if we can make it work, see what it does”. Tremmel (1999) described this aspect of reflection as shaping understanding of an action during it, paying close attention to specific details as events unfold, and creating an occasion for students and teachers to explore together the various ways of revealing the practice of teaching. For Zeichner and Liston (1996), reflective teachers were committed to teaching all of their students to the same high academic standards.

Shane too, said he provided opportunities when he could be open and honest with the students. When Shane felt that he was not performing in the classroom, he involved the students in a reflective process that he thought worked well: “I ask them, how can we readjust that, what strategies do you have that will help”. To Shane, “it’s all about meeting student expectations and being prepared to make these adjustments”. Shane claimed that, by doing this, both students and he could offer things that went well, but meanwhile pick up on other ideas. He aimed to, “model reflective practice to students”. Natalie also took into account the thoughts of students when she said, “I always take the student’s response on board and try and use that to improve”. Sharon similarly actively involved students and had changed her planning to allow more time in her programme for students to reflect.

Earlier in this chapter, I described Natalie's perspective on how she felt she had a responsibility to reflect on her performance during a seminar. She applied the same philosophy in the classroom:

"Often at the end of the day you sit back and you think, that was a lousy day, because a student does not understand or there is off task behaviour and the kids were terrible today. So often it's because we as teachers didn't set things up to be successful and to work well. So I think now you always look at yourself, be reflective, strive to always improve and ask what could I have done better, what can I modify".

She added: "You are your own harshest critic probably", which Ramsay and Oliver (1995) found, demonstrated one of the important dimensions of teacher quality: a hallmark of teacher professionalism is the ability to reflect and to be self-critical.

Natalie was not the only participant to share a perspective concerning the concept of responsibility and ownership of problems or examining the causes of challenging situations. Charlotte, when reflecting or re-evaluating her own performance said that,

"I guess part of the thing of being a good teacher is that you actually do reflect on student performance and be really focused on how do I change or improve it but being open to where the problem lies - with the students or with the teacher".

Charlotte stated: "Perhaps I'm already unconsciously appraising myself in my head, my way and the formal process only confirms what is already going on, but it doesn't actually impact on my performance – the performance is already there". Charlotte's perspective was consistent with Schon (1983), when he discussed a reflective process being intuitive and being self driven rather than influenced by external factors. To Schon, one of the primary qualities distinguishing reflective practice was its emphasis

on the need for students, as well as teachers, to give themselves up to the learning situation and to the action of the moment. This enabled a partnership of experimentation and an environment in which both teacher and student perform. Similarly, Shane's overall perspective on reflection was: "If you don't do it instinctively and as part of your normal teaching routine, I'm afraid my opinion is you shouldn't be teaching."

When talking about colleagues that were considered role models, and with whom she was working, Natalie stated,

"I'd look at those two people and wish I could be more like you in this way and in that way, but you know, there must be something there that is working that I'm doing but I don't know that I recognise it all the time".

Sharon said, "When I looked back at my own teaching it didn't seem very special to me, but to other people it seemed like that. It just seems really normal to me". Schon (1983) noted that every competent practitioner made innumerable judgements of quality for which adequate criteria could not be stated, and skills were displayed for which rules and procedures could also not be stated.

Purpose of Renewal

The exemplary teachers in this study, all looked for opportunities to improve themselves, their teaching, and to be challenged and respond to change to make a difference to student learning. Collinson (1994) claimed that the dispositions of self-renewing individuals are to seek relationships with others, to commit to something they care about, to continually seek to learn and grow, and to be innovative, flexible and creative. These are noted consistently as characteristics of exemplary teachers. Participants in this study applied this and tended to take a 'challenge by choice'

approach in terms of objectives for themselves and students. Their passion and their ability to empower students into making a choice that did enable growth and development, was evident in perspectives. Hay McBer (2002) found that outstanding teachers continuously set and met ambitious targets for themselves and students.

Charlotte said, “I look for ideas about things and seek the opportunity to put them into practice in different forums. Working with people on changes for the better that perhaps could be made”. Exemplary teachers in Collinson (1996a), particularly those who engaged in team teaching early in their careers, realised quickly that learning from and with other adults expanded and challenged their own perspectives. When creating a new faculty structure in her school, Charlotte commented on how enthusiastic she was about the working environment and how, by challenging traditional models of teaching, students benefited: “We’re sort of working as a co-operative – a great model – pushed the boundaries”. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) found evidence that quality teachers understand the context of situations like that described by Charlotte, and have an ability to change the working environment so that challenges are sustained. Sharon, when sharing more about her situation when moving to a new school, said,

“Things were being done that way because there were lots of really good reasons. I always think there might be a better way, and challenge ideas, but I needed to acknowledge the skill and experience of others. I love trying new things, and then if they work bringing other people on board with them and enthusing others about it. I like to set a new direction but then everyone comes in and we all move together.”

Sharon did admit that, “it was more challenging for the older experienced teachers than the younger ones but I think my leadership style is now far more collaborative in that I

work with others rather than doing everything myself". The motivation to continue was evident in Sharon's comment that there was now a "real belief of moving forward, self improving, self extending".

Aspects of Renewal

The link between reflection and renewal when sharing perspectives on performance was in Sharon's comment: "when working with others, I'm now more inclined to research programmes – talk about it to others and reflect in order to improve". She echoed the perspectives of all participants when she said, "you have to keep inventing stuff yourself and forging a path. I think that you can only stay in one place for so long. I think that you need to replenish yourself". All participants described perspectives on performance that related to their disposition to continually learn, to be curious, and challenge themselves and others, to willingly take risks, to embrace change, and think about other perspectives from different viewpoints. Quality teachers in Ramsay and Oliver (1995) were similarly constantly questioning their own approach and their own level of success, were curious to learn about various areas of teaching, and these identified abilities enhanced the prospect of experimentation and risk-taking.

Charlotte revealed her commitment and enthusiasm to learn when she said she had, "a thirst for knowledge and just the sheer enjoyment of doing it because you're actually enjoying what you're learning and just enjoying the stimulation of the brain". Such intellectual flexibility was a disposition towards continuous learning that Collinson (1994) had documented. "There's buckets of new stuff to learn", said Ross. Enthusiasm for what one is teaching served as a powerful stimulus for student learning. It was

evident that the students of teachers studied by Van Schaack and Glick (1982) were motivated to want to learn by having an inspiring model that showed deep involvement and excitement in the search for understanding and knowledge. Natalie stated that she enjoyed sourcing new ideas, and then applied her own individuality to this learning: “I often go and change and modify something that I’ve seen or something that I’ve read somewhere else to suite my own needs”. Similar to the outstanding teachers in Hay McBer (2002), Natalie claimed to continually gather information from wider and more varied sources and used her own systems progressively to do so.

Sharon also claimed to be motivated to perform by researching and learning. Of post - graduate qualifications, she stated: “Study - I love it. Absolutely love it”. In the general context to learning, Sharon said,

“I have become more hungry for information and looking at new ways and continuing to learn. I think that that’s one of the things that really keeps me challenged in my teaching is looking for new ways, and trying them out myself”.

To Sharon, continual learning through self-extension was essential to self-improvement. This deep concern for professional development that underscored a teachers’ commitment to renew themselves and to improve their teaching, was documented in Van Schaack and Glick (1982). Keiny (1994) also commented on a teachers’ desire to develop professionally as a process of conceptual change, and the link to both students’ higher levels of learning, as well as their own ownership and responsibility for learning.

Shane acknowledged that, when faced with a new class at a different year group level, it was a challenge and said, “this has been a bit of a learning curve for me”. However, Shane enjoyed this learning, as it kept him motivated to perform: “I get bored very

easily so I look for a challenge". His desire for variety and his curious disposition was confirmed when he said, "I try and explore things in different ways". In Stone (1987), outstanding teachers themselves suggested that curiosity should be an essential trait in any 'Teacher of the Year' selection process. Shane said that he respected a person who "searches for alternatives" in order to achieve success, as someone he would see as being exemplary. He is passionate about, "being able to do something spontaneous, creative, challenging and questioning".

Charlotte said she, "likes constant challenge and change", and needed to "do new things and see potential in these opportunities". A high performing teacher, according to Canter and Canter (1994), recognised that they were capable of learning new solutions to the challenges they faced. Such an opportunity arose for Charlotte when she found the diversity of her new faculty staff refreshing: "They're interesting and they've got their own ideas and their own opinions and they're quite stimulating, I find". Charlotte claimed to be a champion of intellectual freedom, and loved the challenges, uncertainty and energy this sometimes brought to her teaching. Bolin (cited in Collinson, 1994) stated that renewal included the idea of "growing afresh and without the risk of change one may not be able to discover some fresh thing" (p. 13). Ross claimed he was similarly minded in terms of taking risks and being able to respond to change effectively when he said; "I keep on trying different things and wonder if they would work. I say to the students that I've never tried this before and ask what they think about it". To Ross, it was important to be flexible about whatever students come up with, and spontaneously respond to teachable moments.

With similar spontaneity, Natalie was prepared to allow learning to get off on a totally different tangent to what the class was meant to be looking at, as performance to her encompassed:

“giving them new experiences that are challenging, different and balanced. I enjoy taking a new idea and encouraging a lot of creativity so that the learning is meaningful. If a student is keen on something or an idea, you’ve got to respect their view, make the most of it and go with it”.

Self-renewing individuals such as Natalie, developed habits of minds like curiosity, open-mindedness, objectivity, respect for evidence and the capacity to think critically, according to Gardner (cited in Collinson, 1994).

Summary

From the perspectives of participants in this study, the process of understanding and improving one’s own teaching must start from reflection on one’s own experience. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) deduced that outstanding teachers have high cognitive ability with powers of observation, reflection and analysis. Like those teachers studied by Zeichner and Liston (1996), the participants in this study, as reflective teachers, recognised that the central sources of their teaching are in their knowledge and being sensitive to the context in which their work influenced their actions. Teachers, when they are engaged in the process of reflective thought, bring different combinations of experience and skill, and different sets of concerns. Contrary to the findings of Zeichner and Liston (1996), where secondary school teachers tended to emphasise the content concerns of the academic tradition, and elementary teachers frequently highlighted the students’ understandings found in the developmental tradition, all participants in this

study based their reflective practice and processes on their own learning, and on student understanding and achievement.

As Charlotte stated: “Once I do something and master it effectively I want to then try to extend myself a little bit further as there is always room for improvement, and try another experience, another challenge. It’s about taking risks”. All participants had a reflective attitude, and as in Korthagen and Wubbels (1990), were therefore orientated towards their own professional growth.

Introduction

Two key questions were asked when introducing this study. First, “What are Exemplary Teachers’ perspectives on the notion of performance?” Chapters outlining perspectives on relationships and influences, self-concept, and reflection and renewal, prelude this chapter and have addressed this question. The second question was, “How do Exemplary Teachers enact these perspectives?”

Observations were made of participants, not to judge their performance, but as a means of gathering information that would enable participants to reflect on their own performance as it related to their actions in the classroom. Through sharing perspectives on their performance expectations in the classroom, it revealed how exemplary teachers enacted their perspectives on performance. As Sharon said:

“I think it’s really important that if you are going to expect, to have high expectations for others that you do for yourself as well. I think it’s about having high expectations, and I think that’s with teachers and students, because if you have high expectations of other people they will very often come up to that”.

This chapter reviews perspectives in the context of the performance expectations of participants and their students.

Shane, when he said, “performance is based on the expectation that growth and development occurs”, highlighted the significance of expectations related to educating the whole person in each student. When considering the perspectives of performance expectations of exemplary teachers, Dewey (cited in Collinson, Killeavy, and

Stephenson, 2000, p.26) said, “A teacher applies the science of education to help another to the full realisation of his personality”. Montessori (cited in Salovey, Montessori, Goleman, Gardner, and Csikszentmihalyi, 1998) suggested the same in commenting that: “I feel it is impossible to say that education is limited to just academic achievement. A teacher has to educate the total personality”. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000) also argued that bringing out the best in students, whatever their best may be in their context, was a prerequisite for learning. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson suggested that this would require a change in attitude of students, to the belief that if they do their best they have been successful. This could be achieved with higher expectations.

To frame the chapter, Leithwood’s (1990) dimensions of teachers at their highest level of professional expertise and psychological development, have been used. These are that teachers are:

- Capable of synthesis of perspectives and of balancing the emphasis given to students’ intellectual achievements and interpersonal learning in the classroom
- Adept at using discipline effectively and controlling the classroom in collaboration with their students
- Skilful at encouraging complex functioning, learning, creativity and flexibility to create intellectual, interactive classroom cultures
- Appreciative of multiple possibilities, multiple perspectives, and the interdependency of relationships.

In addition, perspectives on performance expectations that are reciprocated from students are described.

Balancing Intellectual Achievements and Interpersonal Learning

Participants in this study said they were dedicated to the betterment of people, and shared what Van Schaack and Glick (1982) called a Socratic approach to expectations. Rather than spoon-feeding information, participants in this study expected themselves to challenge students to discover their own answers, to work independently, to do it on their own. Shane explained how he saw his role in this regard:

“Responsibility needs to be with the student, as the days of the teacher being the oracle on everything are well and truly over, or should be over. I expect a bit more independence and I think this self-responsibility for learning is the crucial part of learning”.

He did say though, that he had to have something to support students so that they could, “see the opportunities themselves, develop their own ideas, make decisions or choices on their own”. “I model techniques exactly to provide guidance without being directive. Students can then choose to go in their own direction, to have more control of the learning process”, said Natalie. Natalie expressed that she wanted her students to be sure of their ability, be involved, and independent in completing tasks. Her principal perspective on performance that reinforced this expectation was: “getting satisfaction and enjoyment from student’s learning in that they are really passionate about wanting to learn for and by themselves”.

Similarly, Sharon said: “I’m trying to sit back a little bit, so students can take the lead, take responsibility and I can just support. I expect that they will very quickly become independent”. It was not just about individuals for Sharon, she had an expectation that the students as a whole, “take responsibility for the culture in the group, and

demonstrate to each other what's right". She expected all students to be involved in the programme. Sharon's expectation of students reflected an earlier perspective that I described, that linked relationships, caring and respect: "It's almost like a baking powdery action, you know when you've got a child in your class whose really, really, great – they almost fizz and make the others rise, raise their performance, believe in each other". Ross said he "gets alongside" students in a coaching role. He then expressed that he expected student involvement and independence so that, "they'll see that the learning is related to where they are and they can get their heads around it." Once students were on board, Ross expected them to, "make their own calls as to how to present information by having a lot of their own input". He saw it as his responsibility to achieve this "buy in" and enable "learning in the context of passion and enjoyment". Charlotte insisted that students, "have some ownership, they have some part of what was happening in the classroom". Charlotte's expectations about communication skills and creating the right environment for students to excel, was indicated when she said, "they need the ability to form and clearly articulate ideas, their own opinions and discuss".

Giving of their best was considered a common work ethic of participants in this study. It was also an expectation for students. They claimed the status quo was not good enough. Natalie integrated targets into a perspective on performance when she said: "Rewards through achievement of different steps in a problem are the tools to being successful. I always make sure that I'm providing them with a pathway that's going to give them success so they can achieve in that way". Shane said, "I provide challenges and questions, after setting a success structure up". These targets started from an understanding of potential performance and proceeded towards adding value. Hay

McBer (2002) claimed that a key characteristic of an outstanding teacher is their drive for improvement and continuously setting and meeting ambitious targets for themselves and students.

Ross said, “The whole idea was to test their skills, apply base knowledge”, and he continued the self-responsibility theme when he said, “I expect students to establish their own links”. Charlotte’s expectations were to, “push the boundaries, be challenging”, and “be challenged as a teacher”. Sharon stated that she had an expectation to “to be challenged and learn myself”. The work ethic of renewing oneself, permeated throughout all participant’s performance expectations.

Natalie said she wanted her students,

“to be sure of their ability and beaming through setting themselves personal standards, being successful and achieving goals. I really want them to be successful, to be proud of what they’ve done so that they want to succeed again”.

By reacting to learning experiences positively, Natalie said she expected students to “appreciate and value” opportunities. Like in Collinson (1999), exemplary teachers’ in this study said that they had high expectations for students, first as a person, then in their academic performance. There was respect that intellectual differences required different strategies and resulted in different rates of learning.

Charlotte said that she expected students to be relaxed, confident, and comfortable to ask a question or offer information. She stated an expectation that revealed respect for individuality: “I would positively acknowledge them personally when they come to me.

Give encouragement, positive feedback. It's neat watching them grow, with their self-esteem raised when they communicate like this". Good and Brophy (1997) stressed the importance that when considering expectations, and giving feedback, teachers should use individual comparisons and refrain from comparing with the performance of other students. Shane also described a perspective regarding the self-esteem of students when he said that he expected students to, "feel good in themselves and what they are doing, draw on the strengths they've got, be sure and don't give up, giving it their best, and reflect on their own success or work". "I expect the students to be confident to give feedback, feed off each other through this interaction, and self initiate learning", Ross said. Sharon added to these perspectives of feedback and reflection in the context of balancing intellectual achievements and interpersonal learning in the classroom, when she too stated expectations of herself to, "encourage interaction, feedback and enable students to reflect on their own work".

A Socratic approach to performance expectations continued in participants' perspectives in this study, when they included thought provoking and stimulating real life situations, enthusiasm and passion, and even engaging students in heated discussions, as being important. "Allowing for passion to develop through a bit of zing makes something seem realistic to them", said Shane. "Being passionate and creating a sense of wonder for students illustrates the whole idea of putting some fire in their belly really", said Ross. By capturing the students right from the start with a memorable lesson, and other staff in his department were expected to do this as well, Ross said he expected to see excitement among his students, so that they appreciated the "magic" of learning. His reward was "seeing it in their eyes". It was though, a two-way expectation for Ross. Ross expected from students: "a lot of energy, bouncing back the activation energy I

give. This sparking off the class is inspiring to me. It gives me a buzz to see the lights go on – this is performance to me”. Natalie’s perspective indicated she worked behind the scenes in a less dramatic but equally powerful way to meet expectations: “I’m passionate about putting your time and energy into making a real difference, seeing wonderfully positive, purposeful learning experiences”. Sharon and Charlotte, like Ross, talked often of the need to be “enthusiastic and passionate”. Sharon said performance to her was, “making a difference, and knowing that you can”. Sharon’s reward was highlighted when she said, “the wee lights go on in their eyes”. Charlotte’s expectations were that she “brings energy and excitement into the classroom”. The metaphor of “lighting the spark” previously described in Van Schaack and Glick (1982, p.32), was also evident in a perspective that Charlotte used when describing her expectations of students: “to show that they love what they are doing and are enthusiastic, passionate. Being switched on when listening and learning”.

I had earlier described perspectives of all participants regarding reflection and, as part of this process of reflection intrinsic motivation was a factor when discussing expectations. A perspective of Charlotte’s indicated that she believed that being dedicated to the betterment of other people involved a person looking at herself first. Alderman (1999) alluded to this belief and defined a teacher’s high sense of efficacy as being how effective teachers judge themselves to be in a given teaching situation, and this ability was found to be one of the best predictors of increase in student achievement. Charlotte exemplified her high sense of efficacy when she said that: “performance is empowering individuals, feeling comfortable with yourself, being confident, motivating to others and motivating yourself from within - making a difference”.

Participants, through their perspectives, made it clear to the students that they had a high level of expectation of what students would learn. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) also found that students achieve highly when their teachers emphasise academic goals, make them explicit, and have high expectations for their students. In the context of performance expectations, the work ethics of high standards and setting realistic demands was as Stone (1987) suggested, indicative of exemplary teachers taking pride in their work. Stone described this concept as teachers viewing their work if as a personal signature. Collinson (1999), in the same context, included using appropriate pedagogy as necessary to support teacher's high expectations.

Specific to academic goals and as teachers in secondary schools, qualifications and examinations influenced perspectives of Ross and Charlotte's performance expectations. Ross said his expectations included, "high academic achievement for my students" and having excellent content knowledge himself. Charlotte strived for achieving top results, excellence when she said: "I'm thorough and I like things to be done really well". Their overall perspectives mirror what Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000) found, in that learning to exemplary teachers is not just about academic performance, but on learning in its broadest sense: explicit curriculum and developing a disposition toward learning for life.

Sharon claimed she was, "well organised", while Shane said that he constantly worked hard, and expected to have a purpose and direction to his teaching. Shane aimed to be "planned, prepared, organised and confident with the knowledge I present". To Shane, "it's all about going beyond minimum". Alderman (1999) when discussing teacher expectations, echoed a similar perspective, in finding that low levels of achievement

could be overcome through developing a positive academic climate. If expectations were set at floor level (a base from which to work up from in order to grow) instead of ceiling levels (limiting in that only so much is expected from students), Alderman claimed that students could be taught in ways that help all of them develop their abilities.

The link between academic goals, personal pride and standards, and maintaining the emphasis of life learning is continued when Natalie expected her teaching to indicate that she was, “knowledgeable and realistic”. She said she did this through sharing real life experiences, and being “balanced”. Sederberg and Clark (1990) found that teachers like Natalie were very motivated to playing a significant and enriching role in students’ lives by imparting knowledge. Natalie and Sharon both admitted that they liked to be, “a bit of an organiser, action person”. This work ethic perspective reflected Natalie’s determination to get things right, and have the necessary tools to extend students. As Natalie said: “being an effective teacher to me is putting time and dedication in to the background work so that things work well before you come face to face with students, offering extra stuff”. Charlotte also had these high professional expectations, as indicated when she said how important it was to have, “excellence in your professional manner, own subject knowledge, and the desire to pursue excellence with students in the classroom, in a whole variety of forms”. She stated that she felt she was, “an excellent role model from within the team”. This perspective, she said, reinforced high expectations and a desire to influence and challenge others to be the same. Alderman (1999) implied that, when teachers were establishing expectations, they needed to be high and realistic.

Earlier in this study, Ross described that he expected students were, “learning in the context of passion and enjoyment”. Hargreaves (1997) shared a similar view that sums up well the relevance of performance expectations to the exemplary teachers in this study, when balancing intellectual achievements and interpersonal learning in the classroom. To Hargreaves, good teaching involved emotional work and was infused with pleasure, passion, creativity, challenge and joy. It is in this context that all participants expected themselves to create a learning environment in which everyone wanted enjoyment, and students were able to share the excitement and the passion about how well they did. Participants equally expected students to reciprocate their passion for learning.

“I expect to enjoy myself, smile and fun to be had by the students,” said Natalie, as she believed it was a good way of role modelling to students. “The students need to enjoy my teaching and learning, and be happy”, said Sharon. “My classroom is full of enjoyment, humour, and laughter”, said Charlotte. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) also found that in the classroom practice of quality teachers, a sense of fun and excitement pervaded. Ross valued having a good rapport, and by making light-hearted comments, enjoyed himself, when he stated, “so it was a lot of fun really, a good laugh”. Shane said that school was fun when he was a student. By incorporating humour into his classroom practice he said, “that’s what I try and do for the students here too”. Stone (1987) discovered similarities in exemplary teachers included a well-developed sense of humour, a balanced perspective on the world, a genuine love for people, and sincerity about caring for the needs of others.

Using Discipline Effectively and Controlling the Classroom

I have previously described perspectives of participants in this study that suggested that when discussing relationships and self-concept in particular, respect was a fundamental expectation. Participant's perspectives indicated that this expectation enabled them to create an effective learning environment for all students to succeed.

Shane's expectations of students were reflected in his class rules, which emphasised respect and stated: "respect for teacher, follow instructions, respect agreed rules, respect each other – no violence". Shane continued and said that, "students understand these expectations, and the rewards for respecting the rules. They know the consequences and incentives and they respond to it". However, Shane acknowledged that students needed to remain motivated to learn. Shane conveyed this appreciation when he said, "so it's trying to build an environment where there's reward for them, without getting excessive for those people who have shown common sense, taking initiative".

Exemplary teachers in Collinson (1999), modelled and insisted on behaviours such as, helping people get along, gaining respect, listening without interruption, seeking help and advice from others, admitting mistakes, and being honest. Teachers being disciplined, having what Ramsay and Oliver (1995) called managerial competence, and working with students when defining boundaries, also achieved the desired positive effect on learning and performance. The excellent teachers in their study also tried, modelled, and helped students learn how to set realistic goals, give their best effort, and maintain a positive attitude.

Sharon said that, “behaviour expectations are in no doubt and the students know the routine. I’m really clear about these expectations”. However, collaboration was also important to her when working with students, as indicated when she said, “we set these goals together”. Sharon continued, in that her expectation was that students didn’t have to think about any rules: “all they have to do is listen, understand what’s going on, react to it positively and concentrate on learning”. Ross also expressed a perspective that students needed to show, “respect, and know their boundaries”. Ross claimed that he still “drives” the class with a sense of purpose and said: “there’s no question about this”. However, similar to Sharon, he described a perspective that indicated respect for students through an interactive process when he said: “I respond to the needs that they express and I check in with them regularly”. Charlotte expected to “be in control” and to have “well managed boundaries”. She indicated that she managed this by planning every lesson, being focussed, and ensured that students were on task and listening to her and each other.

Charlotte and Sharon both held perspectives on performance expectations for students that highlighted their requirements for effective discipline or control, and their belief that students can be empowered to judge for themselves what is right or wrong. Charlotte’s said her expectation was that, “motivation for students is from within rather than discipline from external sources”. Sharon stated: “I put the responsibility on them as much as possible, but am still supportive. The expectation is that students know where everything is and everything that they need. They have discipline from within”.

In many ways, the perspectives and performance expectations of participants in this study represented a balance between compassion and a ‘no nonsense’ approach to

management and learning. Shane's expectation of himself to be consistent and fair with affirmation was a good example: "Students need to be positive with their communication, do positive things and be a positive role model, support and encourage each other". The mix of handing control and management over to the class, and a teacher directed type control and discipline structure, was a feature of perspectives of exemplary teachers in Boylan et al (1991). Shane's perspective reflected Cammock (2001), who observed that people were not motivated by constant negative feedback. Cammock suggested there was some evidence that high performance was most likely to occur in contexts that are highly appreciative. In this environment, Shane said he expected, "to see achievement of learning, and students taking knowledge on".

Natalie claimed she set high standards and was always out to improve her teaching so that students could, "achieve success repeated, to really develop some skill and progress". She also said that she expected students to be, "interacting positively, supportively". Sharon said she used, "specific positive behaviour reinforcement, a lot of praise", while still having high expectations of achievement for students.

Charlotte linked intellectual achievement, interpersonal learning, discipline and performance expectations, when she said: "I expect students to achieve well academically and in all aspects of being a person". Charlotte's perspective exemplified what Saphier and Gower (1997) outlined as four basic kinds of student performance for which teachers had expectations: quality and quantity of work (based on ability/effort plus expected improvement); work habits and work procedures (time management, following directions, accuracy, routine habits); business and housekeeping routines

(non-academic work related procedures such as attendance, clean up); and interpersonal skills (how each other was treated and cooperation with teacher).

Natalie, Ross, and Charlotte each claimed they needed to circulate around students as a behaviour management technique. By doing this, Natalie said she could ensure that students “didn’t wane in their attention span”. She stated she expected to, “know students and how each will respond”, when interacting with them around the class. The outstanding teachers in Hay McBer (2002) had in place effective discipline and control strategies. Teachers in their study were found to be flexible and decisive in sorting out problems. Hay McBer noted effective teachers habitually scanned their classes, appeared to pick up on everything that was going on, thought and acted ahead, and addressed future problems.

Participants in this study claimed that by interacting with students, and by ensuring student’s concentration and listening skills were intact, the classroom environment was conducive to learning for everyone. Ross claimed that he deliberately worked interactively with students as a control technique. When circulating around the class, he claimed to use his positive relationship with and intimate knowledge of students, when using inclusive questions to enable students to, “buy into it”. Charlotte said she expected students to be, “focussed, motivated, have a sense of purpose, wanting to learn, being on task”, and met this expectation more easily by circulating among students. Expert teachers ‘see more’ than do non-experts:

“They are alive to the latent pedagogical possibilities in the events they witness.

Within a classroom setting, they anticipate what is going to happen. They can spot an inattentive student a mile off. They can detect signs of incipient

difficulty. Their senses are fully tuned to what is going on around them. They are not easily rattled. As younger students sometimes swear is true, they behave as though they had eyes in the back of their heads.”

Jackson (cited in Tremmel, 1999, p.99)

Encouraging Complex Functioning, Learning, Creativity and Flexibility

Shane said, “we need to teach skills for problem solving so students of today can apply them in jobs of the future that are not around yet.” Hargreaves (2003) argued that teaching for today’s knowledge society, involves cultivating capacities in young people such as developing deep cognitive learning, creativity and ingenuity among students, and promoting problem-solving, risk-taking, trust in the collaborative process, ability to cope with change, and commitment to continuous improvement. All participants in this study described perspectives that indicated their total commitment to teaching in such a knowledge society, and they acknowledged the high expectations, the complexity this brings to the job, and the risks. They claimed to accept the challenge and thrive in this learning environment.

Sharon exemplified her positive disposition to these expectations when she said, “I’ve got lots of projects going on all at once, but I know where I am going, I know the direction that I’m heading. The students are sharing ideas, interactive, and involved”. Charlotte also expected students to respond to a collaborative learning environment when she stated that: “they need to enjoy learning in a team atmosphere”. Shane said,

“I try to explore things in different ways, and give responsibilities out, provide variety, have plenty of tools, incorporate as much as I can. Students are expected

to respond by applying skills, showing ability, sharing ideas, and positively interacting. I measure success by the way in which students irrespective of academic standards can, at the end of the year, come up to you and say ‘I worked with this idea and think I’ve done it this and that and I looked at the pros and cons and this is my conclusion’ ”.

Shane claimed that this process started with his own performance expectations, through to what he expected of students, so that they have developed and learned the necessary skills to survive in society. Ross too, said that he expected students to be, “interactive, seeing that learning is related to where they are”.

Natalie conveyed her perspective on performance expectations and developing an effective classroom culture, when she said, “I encourage a lot of creativity and guide students by giving suggestions on different approaches, reinforce previous work and enable transition”. She said she expected students to be, “confident in taking risks and being creative”, in this learning environment. Stone (1987) found that exemplary teachers were highly creative and innovative in their methodology. The importance of creating a classroom culture that enabled and encouraged students to take risks has been described previously in participants’ perspectives on relationships. Creativity and risk taking is also a performance expectation. Shane said, “I allow students to be as creative as need be so that their need for intellectual stimulation is satisfied, and they have confidence in risk taking”. “Risk taking is really important, and students need freedom and intellectual independence,” said Charlotte. Sharon believed that if you set students up for success, then they would do it if you expect them to do it. Sharon claimed that she creatively used imagination as a tool so that students gained this confidence and could, “come out of their shell”, sometimes make up anything, and “live in another

world". Her expectation was that students "know that taking risks and making mistakes is okay because you learn from mistakes through experimenting". Sharon also said that she role modelled this expectation, saying, " I'm willing to take responsibility, take risks".

Collinson (1996a) discussed teaching, as described by exemplary teachers, as a holistic and complex web that reflected their ways of thinking and being. When thinking about whether successful learning had occurred, exemplary teachers in Ramsay and Oliver (1995) went through a reflective process, considered further experimentation, (and the possibility of practical, interactive work,) to further investigate a solution. Exemplary teachers in their study expected of themselves, and aimed to instil the same in their students, the ability to carry a number of ideas in their heads simultaneously and reflect on their performance. As shown by the perspectives of participants in this study, this enabled the creation of an intellectual, interactive classroom culture, which encouraged complex functioning, learning, creativity and flexibility.

Multiple Possibilities and Perspectives

If the real world is the knowledge society that Hargreaves (2003) described, then the interactive, creative, intellectually stimulating environment that exemplary teachers in this study visualised through their perspectives is significant to meeting expectations.

Participants in this study claimed to use real life situations and experiences to further meet expectations. Natalie declared, "I use relevant, real life situations". "Relevance to the everyday world", was important to Charlotte and she stated that she aimed and expected to, "provide really good links into the journey of their own daily lives so that

they see it as being relevant”. Good and Brophy (1997) advocated the necessity for teachers to have expectations of maintaining flexibility when performance is varying either up or down, reteaching another way when students have not understood lessons, and ultimately focusing on assisting students to achieve as much as they can when relating to the real world.

Establishing the links for students in their context was important to Ross. He stated one of his expectations as:

“using real, practical examples and experiences to provide anchors to tie the stuff onto, so they can relate to these experiences, and judge for themselves whether they apply or not. To me it’s very important to keep on relating to the normal, real world but I don’t want the experiments to sit in isolation. There must be links to the theory, links directly back into the previous unit, and the examples used relevant and real”.

Sharon claimed to understand the potential for multiple possibilities and perspectives due to the diversity of her students when she said, “I bring their experiences to whatever we’re doing through practical applications in my classroom programme”. The performance expectations of developing skills, increasing understanding, and helping resolve life adjustment problems, as described in Sederberg and Clark (1990) as characteristics of exemplary teachers, have been realised in these participant’s perspectives.

Reciprocal Expectations

Sharon said that students, “needed to see me as a learner as well”. Sharon continued, “they need to see that the teacher shows they care about them. That they feel their contribution is important”. Ross said he aimed to balance teacher and student centred learning by, “showing you are enjoying learning with students”. “Students expect that their needs are satisfied”, suggested Natalie. Perspectives of the exemplary teachers in this study indicated they had reciprocal expectations of students and that the expectation was that students should articulate these high expectations for them as teachers. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000) indicated that exemplary teachers, by bringing out the best in themselves and people around them, not only held expectations of themselves as part of their work ethic and support their expectations with actions, but also encouraged reciprocal expectations by those they form relationships with and interact. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson also found that teachers like to find out what they can expect as each student’s best effort and what they can do to support them.

“I owe it to students to give them the opportunity to give constructive feedback, because they like this and they also expect that I receive this feedback positively as a teacher”, said Shane. Ross said he strongly respected the student expectation that there was, “always time to answer questions”. In his view, this is essential to good teaching and learning. I had earlier described the importance of relating what was being taught, to students’ daily lives. Charlotte felt this was an expectation of students, and by delivering on this expectation, she said she ensured that there was, “a connection with the teacher, good relationships”. Just as important to Charlotte, was that students

expected her to be able to provide an environment in order for them to show their real talents and potential and, “be themselves”.

Summary

Like the Teachers of the Year in McKay (1997), participants shared perspectives that indicated they were committed to student success and had high expectations of their students. This commitment to teaching, genuine interest in young people, and diligent work habits, enabled success in reaching students. High expectations provided both a driving motivation for sustaining high-level performance, and the ultimate reward for their effort. Having an open, accepting and helping attitude towards students with complex problems, was equally important. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000) argued that high expectations for students were not sufficient, they required active assistance and support, thus demanding high expectations of teachers as well. When participants expected high performance from students, they increased the likelihood of high student performance and this was evident throughout perspectives in this study.

Participants in this study claimed to teach through using real experiences and examples. They described expectations that they have a responsibility to apply these expectations to both academic learning, and social and personal development. Through their high sense of efficacy, perspectives on performance revealed that expectations such as developing a supportive, trusting relationships with students, sharing responsibility, and striving for higher goals for their students, were vital to satisfy Dewey’s (cited in Collinson, Killeavy, Stephenson, 2000, p.26) “full realisation of their personality”. However, participants’ perspectives indicated that in a caring, fun-filled, enjoyable

environment, expectations for both themselves and students were still very high. Shane encapsulated participants' perspectives on performance expectations in this chapter when he said: "I suppose there is not much difference between performance in students and performance in teachers. It is all about giving it your best". Saphier and Gower (1997) concluded that expectations were evidence that teaching was a calling, rather than a job: 'If successful teaching involves getting students to be believers in themselves, then that is a way in which this business resembles the clergy more than a craft'. (p. 334) Participants claimed that seeing the success, achievement, high performance, learning of participants' students, knowing they have done their best, is self-motivating and perpetually fulfilling.

Introduction

This study aimed to investigate exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance in order to understand the complex human interactions that constitute teaching and learning of the highest order. The perspectives of five exemplary teachers who were interviewed and observed revealed four key conceptual themes as being relevant to the notion of performance: relationships and influences, self-concept, reflection and renewal, and performance expectations. Prominent amongst these findings was the conclusion that these teachers had an overwhelming passion for learning and excellence in terms of expectations for themselves and the students they taught, an ability to reflect in a self-critical and natural way, a genuine desire to interact and engage with people, and above all, a caring disposition towards people and their performance. The way participants talked about performance determined how the phenomena of performance, was understood in this study. These teachers saw themselves as learners, continuously developing, and through a strong self-belief, changing as their knowledge changed. How and why they made decisions was closely linked to their beliefs, assumptions, and dispositions.

From my own experience as a teacher, it also appeared that a teacher's perspective on performance would influence his or her effectiveness and motivation. This motivation drove the exemplary teachers in this study to not only continually seek new challenges but also exhibit high standards of professionalism. Decisions around performance have become linked to pedagogical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and the teacher was the person with this knowledge. This situated participants as being the 'expert' in

what constituted performance for their students and for themselves. Perspectives revealed there was no single way of understanding performance; rather this was determined to some extent by participants' worldview. How exemplary teachers in this study enacted their perspectives on performance was an integral part of their capacity as a reflective teacher and the expectations they had of themselves and in particular students. They walked the talk!

Methods

The phenomenological research approach used allowed participants to describe their perspectives on performance in an open and enlightened way, thus successfully gaining entry into their conceptual world. Participants' descriptions and interpretations of the notion of performance in their teaching lives reflected the experiences that constituted their social reality, and enabled me to understand participants more as a whole person. There were surprises, acknowledgements, laughter and emotional episodes throughout the study, which reinforced what a personal activity this study was to participants. They were engaged as whole people.

A qualitative approach was used to allow the participants to describe how they perceived performance and to provide further insight into the richness, complexity and range of teacher attitudes and values. In addition, participants discovered for themselves what is to be understood by the phenomenon of performance, which reflected the emergent research design principles of qualitative research. The use of a case study research design allowed for a number of methods to be used to explore the topic and

was appropriate, as it did allow the description of the perspectives of participants in their own context.

Relationships and Influences

The exemplary teachers in this study all expressed a caring disposition that meant they worked especially hard to know the people they formed relationships with. It was crucial to their own and other's learning capacity. There was consistent evidence in perspectives that establishing emotional bonds with and among students, would build enduring relationships. The complexity of knowing people and establishing respectful relationships was hard to measure but participants recognised the importance of this concept. They appreciated that relationships create change, rather than maintaining the status quo. Getting people on side enabled change; to have empathy and trust in forming these relationships was crucial to participants. Their perspectives indicated an inner strength in understanding others and forming relationships.

Self-Concept

Perspectives of participants, with a strong sense of self, and genuine concern for others, further reflected their ethic of care. When working with and observing others, they indicated that they learned from these experiences. They expressed confidence in deciding how to react in response to the behaviour of others. Their perspectives indicated that this was done in a respectful, considerate and understanding way, to maintain positive relationships.

Despite successes, setbacks and failures of others, participants claimed that they had a high self-awareness, knew what they aimed to achieve, and continually remained hopeful of success. Participants' perspectives indicated that they balanced emotions in an independent way to remain true to themselves. They assumed responsibility through their choices, and perspectives revealed this independence was something they aimed to instil in their students.

Participants in this study showed they gave of themselves a great deal to help and develop others. Their perspectives indicated personal humility and reflected their service orientation and compassion that put a concern for others above their own needs, but did not preclude personal ambition. Discussions revealed a deep sense of contribution to a cause or a principle that went beyond the satisfaction of personal desires for power and achievement. Participants' perspectives revealed a characteristic that makes them different from many other teachers. The choices they made, rather than ability, showed who they truly were during performance.

When making decisions and committing themselves to a desired outcome or vision, participants revealed that courage was required to enable performance. These perspectives further demonstrated that performance included real determination to overcome or face real or perceived fears, which was required to realise achievement or excellence.

Underlying these perspectives of participants was an eternal sense of optimism and faith. The exemplary teachers in this study revealed themselves as having faith in themselves and others, as well as a strong sense of self and concern for others, what

Cammock (2001) called the “heart of character” (p. 141), and a passionate commitment to influence others and make a difference.

Reflection and Renewal

During the two video recall observations, participants described perspectives that were particularly relevant in meaning to their lives. Participants were very much reflecting on their own performance. Participants identified areas to improve on during the recall, and spontaneously described how this would happen. Their perspectives revealed that they valued mastery in the sphere of their weaknesses over the performance in the sphere of their strengths, and pushed themselves beyond what they thought they were capable of. Reflection was motivated by personal and professional expectations. In the midst of performance, they were thinking about something while they were doing it.

Even during uncertain or challenging times, regular, systematic and ordered reflection was common among participants’ perspectives. Participants claimed to be in control of their professional practice. Control in this context, suggested discipline from within. These exemplary teachers described relevant techniques and competent application of tried and true ‘rules of thumb’ of reflection. Perspectives indicated a feel for their practice and a liking for reflecting on this practice, as they created something of practical use for their students: using real life experiences in an innovative, flexible and creative way.

Participants had the ability to explain the reflective process they were going through, and what had been learned, which to many teachers is only an intuitive process. To

these exemplary teachers, performance is in what they do, in their eyes. Through self-renewal, participants claimed they developed habits like curiosity, open-mindedness, objectivity, respect for evidence and the capacity to think and reflect critically. The power of performance was to participants', synonymous to reflection.

Performance Expectations

The perspectives of participants in this study highlighted that maintaining high expectations for both themselves and student performance was a crucial factor to effective teaching. They stated that their behaviour was seen as inextricably linked to that of their students in the unrelenting pursuit of excellence. Participants shared a common belief that all students could achieve. Their perspectives indicated that they felt that through the high expectations they set for students, this belief was very apparent to the students. Participants' perspectives indicated that high performance expectations relied on the relationship between these beliefs and attitudes, and students' achieving well, not only academically, but also first and foremost, in all aspects of being a person. Exemplary teachers in this study wanted to motivate students for life.

All participants described performance expectations that conveyed that if the student was seen and involved as an active partner in the learning process, the students' motivational and emotional state became more relevant and they could be engaged in learning and find out that they were capable of more. Ambitious, but realistic targets were set for students. Participants expected of themselves, through knowing students' potential performance, to challenge students in this way to discover their own answers, to work independently, to be sure of their ability.

Participants' high professional expectations were role modelled through a positive attitude as learners themselves, so that students would meet and exceed this expectation through self-motivation. Participants' perspectives included the claims that enthusiasm, passion and joy of teaching and learning, were expected to be contagious to students. The performance expectations of participants revealed that they considered the best possible conditions for learning to include a positive, personal learning attitude where challenge was high and risks, anxiety and self-doubt were low. By bringing out the best in themselves and people around them through high performance expectations, the perspectives of exemplary teachers in this study allowed the provision of a learning environment to show their real talents and potential, and to be themselves – the same expectations they had of students.

Review

Different Perspectives

Exemplary teachers in this study shared many perspectives, but also brought different perspectives to their positions and had personal attributes that were distinctive and different. For example, participants had very different influential relationships: teachers and presenters, principals and colleagues, family and friends, role models and people who ignited enthusiasm for an idea. They also had an eclectic mix of motivational needs including being independent and also enjoying the collaborative nature of teams.

In addition, each participant favoured a different 'medium' in which performance was relevant to them, uniquely defined performance and had a variety of measures of their achievement. Natalie said she "favoured modelling performance exactly through techniques and examples". Sharon said she "loved being in team environments" and correspondingly, perspectives on performance reflected how she used this environment to enthuse and affect performance. Shane said he "set up students for success by role modelling" and this enabled him to demonstrate growth and development as a whole person. Ross's medium for performance was in the creation of a real life experience. Creating a sense of wonder so that students could see the magic for themselves. Charlotte's used oral, effective and highly skilled communication as her performance medium to "empower individuals and hook them into their passions".

There was scope to look more at differences between participants and conduct second interviews. This process could have included clearly differentiating in findings whether data was obtained from stimulated recall, individual interview, or group interview. This differentiation may have contributed more to the context for each participant. When researching the relevant literature on exemplary teachers and performance, rather than focusing significantly on similarities of exemplary teachers and criteria for performance, differences or variants also would have provided rich data concerning perspectives on performance. However, this is balanced by the fact that although perspectives sometimes differed in comparison, as in the performance mediums or influences above, the essentials of the experiences were remarkably alike.

Implications of Findings

Sharon said of teacher education, that there needed to be,

“A learning environment, which had a good mix – where teachers could develop personally and professionally. There needed to be a really high focus on observation and teacher learning where quality time was allowed to reflect on current educational concepts”.

This study has clearly revealed that New Zealand schools have some very talented people in them and it is my belief that we need educational leaders who can liberate this talent. There is so much more to learn about teaching and learning from those who excel at teaching. To understand how to harness the life experiences of teachers and channel them into contributing to develop more effective teacher role identities, would be a valid activity for teacher education institutions. As educators, we need to ask ourselves, how do we motivate all teachers to intrinsically and subconsciously, look at themselves, to maintain and increase performance?

Performance appraisal should inspire people to a passion for their jobs or even a cause. Within performance management systems in New Zealand schools, are the current dimensions of performance narrowly defined as a vehicle for reinforcement rather than opportunities to enable so called exemplary teachers to perform? The perspectives of participants suggested that appraisal measurements were the least important part of the process. What exemplary teachers appear to grow and develop in as people, are performance culture environments. Perspectives of participants in this study suggested they are capable of generating such an environment within their own sphere or classroom. Participants said that they enacted excitement, passion, what they were here

for – the betterment of students and themselves, in their performance. Participants' perspectives indicated that of most importance, are people who listen, care, engage, ask, and reflect: the human process of talking and thinking – not a paper based process divorced from staff. Performance Management is much more complex when considering these intangibles, and the competencies, knowledge, skill and abilities – the key things that people have and bring to an organisation. Any performance management or outstanding teacher criteria are as complex as the exemplary teachers in this study. There is a need to review current thinking regarding performance criteria of teachers and the language used to attributable characteristics, given that this study has portrayed the concept of performance as largely intrinsically located for these exemplary teachers, and focus more on the person, rather than technical expertise.

Future Research

True character was revealed in participants' perspectives when they described challenges that far exceeded their skills. Participants in this study made conscious choices to accept these challenges and 'dig deep'. Sergiovanni (1991) claimed that successful matching of challenge and skill is likely to result in "flow" – total absorption in one's work. (p.245) Csikszentmihalyi (1990), in 1975, first developed Flow Theory as a way of understanding the potential of performance as a source of motivation. He argued that such an individual experience and performance could be transformed by concentrated attention on activities that all participants in this study described: activities that provided variety, appropriate and flexible challenges, clear goals, and immediate feedback. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) continued to suggest that any activity that induced flow had the capacity to push a person to higher levels of performance, enjoyment and

consciousness. When at a peak, this state of consciousness, where abilities were in balance with the demands of tasks, had all the components of rational thinking, passion, and engagement that participants in this study described as being important in the context of performance. I believe that the phenomenon of flow has much to offer for future research, to increase understanding of exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance.

Summary

In this study, exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance showed that they were emotionally committed to learn, motivated, and through thinking and accessing information in a variety of ways, were prepared to learn in a worldly way. Csikszentmihalyi (cited in Salovey et al, 1998) described this as a person experiencing optimal flow, and such a state engendered a thirst for learning and experience that participants in this study wanted to repeat, and do again and again. They were passionate about choosing to use their ability and skills to make learning exciting and interesting for students in the context that they perceived students and society expected. These exemplary teachers saw it as their moral responsibility to serve society, to fulfil a need. Their perspectives demonstrated that if you open up all opportunities, others too will experience a self-rewarding state of flow, in a variety of contexts, and therefore balance is achieved. What made an activity so special for the exemplary teachers in this study was the feeling one got from the activity itself. They have taken charge of their conscious experiences and inner life. In the words of William Arthur Ward (cited in Stewart, 1989): "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." (p.2)

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Appendix A:

Craig McDowell
18 Twyford Street
Christchurch 8005
Ph: (03) 3590557
Email: c-r-mcdowell@xtra.co.nz

20th September 2000

Dear [First Name]

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study of Exemplary Teachers. As one of a group of teachers around Christchurch that have been recognised through a national excellence in teaching award, your participation will be invaluable. The research is being undertaken as part of my study for a Master of Teaching and Learning degree at Christchurch College of Education.

Through individual and group interviews, in class observation, and video recall sessions, the general aim of my research is to discover Exemplary Teachers' perspectives on performance in teaching. Your participation will help better understand how exemplary teachers view their role. All raw data from interviews and observations are confidential to myself, my supervisors and the person involved in transcribing the data and will be stored securely both on my computer and on back up electronic facilities. Passwords are required to enter these sites. Any direct quotations used in publication will be unattributable.

I am requesting your consent to participate in:

- An individual interview;
- An in class observation;
- Simultaneous videotaping of this observation;
- A group interview of up to 1.5 hours duration, which will involve approximately 4 other participants in this study.

You do have the right to withdraw from the study but this needs to be done before the group interview.

The interviews, observations and video recall session will be scheduled at your convenience. The individual interview and the video recall session will be in a location of your choice. The intended timeframe for interviews and observations is during the first three terms of 2001, with the group interview scheduled for term 4 in 2001.

Two copies of the transcript of your interview will be sent to you. One copy is for you to retain. I would be grateful if you would read this transcript and return the second copy to me with any comments you wish to make noted on the transcript. You also have the option of receiving any journal or conference paper that arises from this study.

Please complete the consent form to participate in the study that follows this letter. This should be returned to me in the self addressed and stamped envelope provided by October 1st. I will contact you by phone or email to establish our first appointment. Upon receipt of your consent, I will also write to your Principal to ensure that he or she

is aware of and comfortable with the observation part of the process. You are encouraged to chat to your Principal in the first instance to share our intentions. If you have any further queries please contact my supervisors or myself.

I'm conscious of the busy nature of work for you at any time of the year. I would be extremely grateful for your participation and look forward to working with you.

Sincere thanks,

Craig McDowell

Supervisors:

Joce Nuttall
Ph: 3482059 ext 8312

Dr. Vince Ham
Ph: 3482059

Appendix A continued:

Exemplary Teachers' Perspectives on Performance: M.Tch.Ln. thesis by Craig McDowell

Participant Consent

I understand that by participating in this study, I agree to:

An individual interview of approximately 1 hour, which will be taped and transcribed;
Reading, commenting on and returning a supplied transcript of the interview;
Being observed for approximately 1 period of my teaching day as negotiated with the researcher, with the researcher being a non-participant and taking notes during this observation;

- Having a stationary video camera simultaneously recording the observation session;
- Meeting with the researcher within 48 hours after the observation to view and comment on the video recording;
- To participate in a group interview for approximately 1.5 hours with other participants in the study.

I understand that by being involved as a participant in this study:

- I am entitled to withdraw from the study up to the time of the group interview;
- All data is confidential;
- Any direct quotes used will be unattributable;
- Data will be retained for a period of up to 3 years after the study during which this can be used by the researcher for any conference papers, journal articles or subsequent reports drawn from the data;
- Data will be destroyed after the withdrawal of the participant from the study before the group interview, or after the agreed 3 year period of retention;
- Disclosure will be made of an individual participants' identity only to other participants in the study and to the researcher's supervisors;
- The information will be stored in a secure location, available only to the researcher, his transcriber and his supervisors.

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I would like to receive a copy of a journal article or conference paper that may result as a consequence of this thesis.

Tick box

☐

Appendix B:

Craig McDowell
18 Twyford Street
Christchurch 8005
Ph: (03) 3590557
Email: c-r-mcdowell@xtra.co.nz

26th August 2000

Principal
[School]
[Address]

Dear [Name]

As part of research being undertaken as part of my study for a Master of Teaching and Learning degree at Christchurch College of Education, I wish to observe one of your staff for a brief time (1-2 hours) during term 4, 2000.

The title of my thesis is **Exemplary Teachers' Perspectives on Performance**.

[participant's name] has been recently recognised through the ASG National Excellence in Teaching Awards and I have received consent from [participant] to be part of this study.

The focus of the observation is the teacher and not the students. Anything the students say or do will only be noted in response to an aspect of performance of the teacher. The student's experiences of exemplary teaching are not relevant, and although my presence and the intended use of a video may influence some students, the aim is to minimally impact the classroom and the learning that is taking place. In transcribing my field notes and other observations, complete confidentiality of the students, the teacher and your school is assured. The resulting thesis will only be shared with my supervisors and examiners.

The general aim of my research is to gain insights into how they view their role as a teacher and enable a better understanding of how Exemplary Teachers perceive performance in teaching.

I'm certainly looking forward to working with [participant's name] and trust that you are comfortable and supportive of the project. [He/she] has been encouraged to talk to you about the study but if you have any initial queries, please contact myself or my supervisors at the Christchurch College of Education, Dr. Joce Nuttall or Dr. Vince Ham. Their phone number is (03) 3482059.

Sincere thanks,

Craig McDowell

Appendix C:

Guided interview schedules

Personal

Personal history

- Family
- Responsibilities
- Support
- Changing priorities over career

Academic background

- Family's emphasis on education
- Academic achievements
- Salient experiences at school or university
- Outstanding teacher models
- Why teaching selected as career

Personal performance

- Community involvement or leadership
- Interests and pursuits
- Their influence or effect within their school
- Enabling/constraining factors affecting performance

Professional

Professional performance

- Kinds of high performance based activities
- The role of professional development
- Patterns of scope of interest and involvement e.g. school, provincial, national
- Collegial relationships and networks

Organisational climate: enabling and constraining factors affecting performance

- Relationship with principal
- Organisation of school
- Resources
- Collegiality
- Parents and community
- Curriculum
- School/provincial support in recognising performance
- Decision making processes
- Student achievement

Appendix C continued:

Personal and Professional

Work ethic

- Decisions surrounding staying in/leaving teaching
- Beliefs about learning and teaching
- Impact of personal and professional performance on teaching

Disposition

- How constraints/changes are handled
- Capacity for reflection
- Judgments when risk taking
- Impact of personal and professional renewal on teaching

Ethic of care

Vision of an ideal exemplary teacher

Extended Abstract

Exemplary Teachers' Perspectives on Performance

A paper submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Teaching and Learning

By Craig R. McDowell

Christchurch College of Education

November 2004

Exemplary Teachers' Perspectives on Performance

This paper presents a summary of the context, methods and key findings from the research study, submitted for a Master thesis.

Introduction

This study investigated the perspectives of exemplary teachers in order to understand more, human interactions that constitute teaching and learning of the highest order. Theories explaining the complex nature of teacher excellence remain limited. The purpose of this study was to shed light on the notion of performance from the perspective of exemplary teachers and answer two key questions: what are exemplary teachers' perspectives on the notion of performance, and how do exemplary teachers enact these perspectives?

A description of teacher performance as a distinct phenomenon in the relevant literature on teacher effectiveness and quality was rare. Phrases like 'performance management', 'performance appraisal', and 'performance criteria', were however, common. During recent reforms in education that incorporated elements of performance, there has been a tendency to focus on school effectiveness and improvement, and enhanced competency and professionalism from teachers. Bridson (1998) challenged aspects of teacher performance in suggesting that a shift in focus in New Zealand schools was needed, to increase teacher motivation in order to maintain performance. Collinson, Killeavey and Stephenson (1999) claimed that the focus on competence needed to change to a focus on caring, as the motivation for competence.

Only cursory attention has been given to aspects of teaching that showed the increasingly complex nature of knowing students and establishing meaningful relationships. Hargreaves (1997) understood good teaching to not just be a matter of being efficient, developing competence, mastering techniques and possessing the right kind of knowledge. Good teaching involved emotional work. It was infused with pleasure, passion, reflection, high expectations, creativity, challenge and joy. Black (1998) suggested that improved learning required thoughtful reflection, discussion, interaction between teachers, and formative feedback.

Relevant Literature

The studies and developing theory on exemplary teachers of Collinson (1994; 1996; 1999) revealed that the combination of competence, skilful relationships, and character, emerged as recognisable features of exemplary teachers. Throughout these studies and other literature, three areas of research emerged that were relevant to this study: the recognisable features of exemplary teachers; the influence of their capacity for reflection and thinking; and descriptions of teacher performance through technical expertise.

Van Schaack and Glick (1982) defined “superlative teachers” as having characteristics and attributes that made them well known and recognisable: success, total commitment, and responsibility towards student learning. Sederberg and Clark (1990) and Stone (1987) noted that dedication, genuine caring for others, and innovation emerged as common attributes of “effective” teachers. Board (1992) suggested that there was an overriding attribute that great teachers possess: passion - for learning, for knowledge, for excellence, for life. These themes paralleled what Collinson (1994; 1999), Ramsay

and Oliver (1995), and McKay (1997) identified as characteristics of exemplary teachers: intellectual excitement, a commitment to teaching, high interpersonal concern, and effective motivational strategies.

Having strong self-concept was apparent in Van Schaack and Glick's (1982) study of "superlative teachers". Stone (1987) argued that there was a relationship between the self of the teacher and effective teaching. The exemplary teachers in Collinson (1994) talked about the importance of intrapersonal knowledge: modelling desirable behaviour, values and dispositions. Collinson (1999) outlined an ethic of care and work ethic, as characteristics of exemplary teachers. Ramsay and Oliver (1995) argued that exemplary teachers were more reflective about their own style and process. Leithwood and Stager (1986) reported that throughout a teacher's experience in teaching, a necessary change was needed to be more reflective in problem solving.

House (1971) contended that performance came from an emphasis on human relationships and social interaction and having accomplished worthwhile and challenging tasks. This study was concerned with this perspective.

Methods

Qualitative research techniques were used in this study to provide insight into the richness, complexity and range of teacher attitudes, values, and perspectives. A variety of fieldwork techniques provided a range of ways to discover and record people's experiences and how they interpreted them (Bauman & Adair, 1992; Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Cohen & Manion, 1994).

The inquiry aimed to be broad and open-ended with the intended discovery of what is to be understood by the participants about the phenomenon of 'performance'. This approach reflected the emergent research design principles of qualitative research (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Since this study explored a specific phenomenon, a phenomenological orientation was appropriate as a way to gain entry into participants' conceptual worlds and produce an interpretation of this reality that was useful in understanding the whole person (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). The case study method for a phenomenon in depth, was appropriate for this study because it allowed exploration and a description of the perspectives of participants when the context was important (Marshall and Rossman, 1989).

Data was generated from five teachers that had been awarded an Excellence in Teaching Award in New Zealand. Participants taught at a variety of types of schools and there was a good age spread, mix of experience, different levels of responsibility, and gender. Participants have been identified in this study by pseudonyms. Data generation methods included, in depth, semi-structured interviews and observation of all participants, video recall observation sessions with two participants, and a group interview.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) suggested that qualitative data analysis was an intuitive and inductive process. Following data analysis techniques as described by Taylor and Bogdan (1998) and Coffey and Atkinson (1996), the following conceptual themes emerged: relationships and influences, self-concept, reflection and renewal, and performance expectations.

Findings

Relationships and Influences

Participants' perspectives indicated an inherent strength in understanding that for relationships to form and develop, they had to work hard to know people. Participants' claimed that they explicitly valued other's diversity, and retained respect, even during challenging times. Hay McBer (2002) outlined that respect for others underpinned everything outstanding teachers do. Charlotte stated:

“The kids, the relationship and teaching is the heart of it. The ability to create relationships with people is crucial to both teaching in the classroom and managing a school. Your ability to connect with people is crucial to every aspect of your performance.”

Collinson (1999) found that relationships illustrated the multifaceted nature of respect that characterises exemplary teachers' classrooms, as they set the stage for their own and other's learning capacity. Shane said: “the experiences I provide for students and the resulting relationships that are established, are the springboard to learning for life.”

Participants' perspectives indicated that successful teaching and learning occurred when they had caring relationships with students, and in the words of Shane, “know them damn well”. By knowing students and their capabilities, participants claimed to create a challenging, yet safe, supportive, and nurturing environment. There was an overall awareness of balance in teacher-student relationships. By establishing strong, positive, respectful relationships with students, yet still providing boundaries, this was contended to be key to successful learning and performance.

Perspectives of participants indicated that establishing emotional bonds with and among students, would build enduring relationships. Charlotte said, “Engagement is crucial. If you don’t connect with the students in the classroom you may as well not be there.” Ross said, “ultimately teaching and learning is a human personal activity.” Hargreaves (2003) reinforced the importance of this bond in a wider sense, by suggesting that achievement at learning also demanded intellectual and emotional engagement with schooling and all the relationships it contained.

The complexity of knowing people and establishing respectful relationships was recognised by exemplary teachers in this study. They appreciated that relationships created change, and to have empathy and trust was crucial. Relationships needed to be secure enough to withstand the discomfort that disagreement, risk or challenge created. Shane said his classroom environment was “safe, where students can take a risk without feeling that they’re going to be shot down. I’d like to think that I’m positive and encourage them to try something, as opposed to whatever I say.”

Participants’ perspectives on performance had been shaped by many different relationships in their family lives and educational careers. Relationships were formed through mutually held values and beliefs. Role models had fashioned a sustained pattern of performance during participants’ teaching career to date (Sederberg and Clark, 1990). Participants described meaningful insights into the reasons for the ongoing behaviour of others and themselves as these relationships evolved; motivation, their ability to impact on others, the influence on others to perform, and success.

Participants had mutual respect for other's talent, and a view that high performance could only occur in a supportive environment where ideas were shared and developed, and enthusiasm was generated, together. Sharon stated:

“If the relationships are right, then often everything else will just fall into place.

I like the concept of a community of learners being strong, people working together, building relationships and using each other's skills, and supporting each other.”

Hargreaves (1997) noted that how teachers work with teachers affects how well they work with students.

Self-Concept

Participants' perspectives revealed strong self-concept, knowledge of who they were as individuals, and a genuine concern for others. “It is important to me to be passionate about what I do and believe in it,” said Charlotte. Participants claimed to be sensitive to others' feelings through encouragement and support. Like in Collinson (1999), exemplary teachers in this study did not in fact differentiate between an ethic of care and learning. Sharon stated, “being interested in students and believing in them” was essential to good teaching, and that caring and loving were “so important”. All students could learn and more would learn if educators were able to provide a supportive caring environment that would nurture hearts as well as minds (Osterman & Freese, 2000; Ramsay & Oliver, 1995). However, participants indicated that leniency in terms of student behaviour and effort, and being perpetually agreeable were not effective when considering performance. “I'd like to be tough, but I'd like to think I'm fair and I've got a compassionate side as well”, said Natalie.

Participants claimed that they had high self-awareness, knew what they aimed to achieve, and what they could learn and apply from experiences. Sharon said, “I’ve done a huge lot of learning this year. It’s been really great, and a real challenge but I feel really satisfied with what I’ve learned and what I will be able to do with the students”. How effective teachers judge themselves to be in a given teaching situation is a form of self-efficacy, and has been found to be one of the best predictors of an increase in student achievement (Alderman, 1999). Participants expressed confidence in deciding how to react in response to the behaviour of others in challenging teaching situations.

Participants claimed they gave of themselves a great deal to help and develop others. Ross reflected: “Giving freely to each other used to be the norm – the basis of good education”. Perspectives of participants showed a service orientation that put a concern for others above their own needs. Sharon said of a school environment she had experience in: “It was very person based; believing in each other, looking out for each other, standing behind each other; a real caring environment – I think this is so important”.

Participants’ perspectives showed they kept in touch with core personal values. This, they claimed, was crucial to win the confidence of others and create a climate of trust. Shane said, “I don’t see values as separate from what you’re modelling to students”. Zehm and Kottler (1993) suggested that a teacher, who demonstrated respect for individuals, accepted others. This required values such as tolerance, sensitivity and cultural awareness.

Participants thought that high performance relied on passion, ambition, motivation, enthusiasm, and work capacity. Ross said, “I love teaching. Nothing can replace an impassioned teacher.” Charlotte talked about how “passion and enthusiasm” was key to performance. Natalie’s phrase “I don’t like to give up” reflected persistence and discipline. Charlotte stated, “One of the most important facets of being a good teacher is seeking excellence”.

Participants cared about and took pride in their performance, and claimed to believe that dedication and determination would make a difference. Charlotte said,

“Well it’s demanding, incredibly demanding on your time, but rewarding in terms of the relationships that you establish with people, seeing particularly at risk young people going through problems, making progress through it, and coming out the other side”.

Perspectives revealed a deep sense of contribution to a cause or a principle that went beyond the satisfaction of personal desires.

Underlying perspectives of participants were an eternal sense of optimism and faith that every student could succeed. Sharon said, “attitude and work can move mountains.” The exemplary teachers in Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000), despite complexities, frustrations, and setbacks, also managed to remain hopeful. Participants said how important a good sense of humour was, to laugh at themselves and with others, and bounce back quickly if knocked back.

Shane said performance was, “being committed to the job, the students and what you have in mind for them”. “Don’t give up on things that you are passionate about”,

Natalie said to students. The exemplary teachers in this study claimed to have faith in themselves and others, as well as a strong sense of self and concern for others – what Cammock (2001) called the “heart of character” (p. 141).

Reflection and Renewal

Reflection was a learning process for the exemplary teachers in this study, which enabled them to deal with situations of uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict. Natalie, when students were off task or “terrible”, said,

“Often at the end of the day you sit back and you think, that was a lousy day. So often it’s because we as teachers didn’t set things up to be successful and to work well. So I think now you always look at yourself, be reflective, strive to always improve and ask what could I have done better, what can I modify?”

Dewey (cited in Tremmel, 1999, p.107) first elaborated thinking about a reflective or inquiry process to learning occurring when there was: “A felt difficulty”. Schon (1983) suggested that the practice of reflection could occur when a person is trying to deal with a phenomenon, which might be puzzling, or troubling or interesting.

Participants thought about different viewpoints, and were aware, in a caring way, of how context and situations varied, and how students differed in many ways. When reflecting, participants examined if they were the problem and should change or improve. This attention to the detail of a situation and the people involved, led participants to reflect compassionately on students’ needs. Charlotte said,

“I guess part of the thing of being a good teacher is that you actually do reflect on student performance and be really focused on how do I change or improve it but being open to where the problem lies - with the students or with the teacher”.

The perspectives of participants showed that they chose to reflect rather than accept the status quo. Continual learning and improvement was synonymous with their need for self-renewal. Collinson (1999) linked the capacity for habitual and deliberate reflection to student learning, to teachers' disposition towards continuous learning and renewal. It was this rekindling of enthusiasm or replenishment of a goal, that was an important part of participants' performance. Sharon said, "You have to keep inventing stuff yourself and forging a path. I think that you can only stay in one place for so long. I think that you need to replenish yourself".

Participants did not passively accept solutions and mechanically apply them. Ross stated, "I say to the students that sometimes I don't know whether this will work, but let's have a go, see if we can make it work, see what it does". Tremmel (1999) described this aspect of reflection as shaping understanding of an action during it, and creating an occasion for students and teachers to explore together the various ways of revealing the practice of teaching. Participants' perspectives reflected their disposition to be curious, to challenge themselves and others, to willingly take risks, and embrace change. Sharon said,

"I have become more hungry for information and looking at new ways and continuing to learn. I think that's one of the things that really keeps me challenged in my teaching is looking for new ways, and trying them out myself".

Participants' concern for professional development underscored their commitment to renew themselves and improve their teaching, as in Van Schaack and Glick (1982).

Participants created through reflection, something of use for students - real life experiences that were innovative, flexible and creative. Ross talked about, "using real, practical examples and experiences to provide anchors to tie the stuff onto, so they can relate to these experiences, and judge for themselves whether they apply or not." Priest's (cited in Priest and Gass, 1997) paradigm of experiential learning and judgement begins with a real concrete experience, works through to a conclusion, and ends with an evaluation of the success or failure of the application. The experiential nature of reflection that participants' described, suggested that reflection was accomplished spontaneously. Shane said, "If you don't do it instinctively and as part of your normal teaching routine, I'm afraid my opinion is you shouldn't be teaching." Schon (1983) claimed that a reflective process was intuitive and self driven, rather than influenced by external factors. Liston and Zeichner (1990) believed that action initiated reflection, and self-reflective practice arose naturally in the work of teachers.

In participants' perspectives, careful reflection was claimed to be integral to successful learning. Sharon said she was, "Openly learning from students, working together if it doesn't work, looking for continual self improvement." The link between reflection and learning was provided by many educational theorists, including Dewey (cited in Collinson, 1994), and Schon (1983), where learning that was dependent on integrating experience with reflection, was advocated. Take away reflection and renewal and the individual had a series of experiences that were unconnected and ineffective in changing how he or she learned about the world. Reflecting on experience was the process, according to Cairn (cited in Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, and Gass, 2000, p.7), that "opens the door to real learning" and renewal. Participants claimed to provide the environment and opportunity for reflection so that the magic of learning occurred.

Through self-renewal, participants claimed they developed habits like curiosity, open-mindedness, objectivity, respect for evidence and the capacity to think and reflect critically (Gardner, cited in Collinson, 1994). The power of performance was to participants, synonymous to reflection. As Charlotte stated: “Once I do something and master it effectively I want to then try to extend myself a little bit further as there is always room for improvement, and try another experience, another challenge. It’s about taking risks”. All participants had such a reflective attitude, and were orientated towards renewal and their own professional growth (Korthagen and Wubbels, 1990).

Performance Expectations

By describing perspectives on their performance expectations in the classroom, it revealed how participants enacted their perspectives on performance, and how high expectations for both themselves and student performance were crucial to effective teaching. Sharon said,

“I think it’s really important that if you are going to expect, to have high expectations for others that you do for yourself as well. If you have high expectations of other people they will very often come up to that”.

Participants described how they communicated expectations and that their behaviour was inextricably linked to that of students and their development. Charlotte said that, “performance is empowering individuals, feeling comfortable with yourself, being confident, motivating to others and motivating yourself from within - making a difference”.

Participants' felt that by setting high expectations, their belief that all students could achieve was very apparent to students (Gipps and MacGilchrist, 2002). Knowing students, understanding their needs and how they think, and how they coped with challenging situations, were claimed to be essential to meet high expectations. Collinson, Killeavy, and Stephenson (2000) found that bringing out the best in students, whatever their best may be in their context, was a prerequisite for learning. Shane stated: "performance is based on the expectation that growth and development occurs". Participants' expectations reflected Dewey's (cited in Collinson, Killeavy and Stephenson, 2000, p.26) "full realisation of personality" and Montessori's (cited in Salovey, Montessori, Goleman, Gardner, and Csikszentmihalyi, 1998) education of the "total personality". Participants' felt that high performance expectations relied on the relationship between beliefs and attitudes, and students achieving well in all aspects of being a person (Collinson, 1999).

Participants claimed to accept the challenge and thrive in an environment in which a wide range of curriculum activities, were expected. Sharon said, "I've got lots of projects going on all at once, but I know where I am going, I know the direction that I'm heading. The students are sharing ideas, interactive, involved, thinking together and moving forward". Participants acknowledged the complexity of real classrooms and the need for a variety of teaching strategies to cultivate capacities in students such as developing deep cognitive learning, ingenuity and problem solving skills (Hargreaves, 2003). Shane said,

"We need to teach skills for problem solving so students of today can apply them in jobs of the future that are not around yet. I allow students to be as

creative as need be so that their need for intellectual stimulation is satisfied, and they have confidence in risk taking”.

The exemplary teachers in this study used real life situations and experiences to meet expectations. Charlotte expected to, “provide really good links into the journey of their own daily lives so that they see it as being relevant”. Good and Brophy (1997) advocated the necessity for teachers to have expectations of ultimately focusing on assisting students to achieve as much as they can when relating to the real world.

Participants claimed that the interactive, thought provoking and stimulating nature of classes, provided an environment where it was expected that students became positive about learning, and could cope with change. Natalie said, “I encourage a lot of creativity and guide students by giving suggestions on different approaches, reinforcing previous work”. She said she expected students to be, “confident in taking risks”.

Participants felt that if the students were active partners in the learning process, their motivational and emotional states were stimulated and they became engaged in learning. Natalie stated performance was, “getting satisfaction and enjoyment from student’s learning in that they are really passionate about wanting to learn for and by themselves”. Ross saw it as his responsibility to achieve “buy in” and enable “learning in the context of passion and enjoyment. Creating a sense of wonder for students”. Participants’ claimed that enthusiasm, passion and joy of teaching and learning, were expected to be contagious. Charlotte expected to “bring energy and excitement into the classroom” and that students “show that they love what they are doing and are enthusiastic, passionate”.

Ambitious, but realistic targets were set. Charlotte's expectations were to, "push the boundaries, be challenging", and "be challenged as a teacher". Participants expected of themselves, through knowing students' potential performance, to challenge students to discover their own answers, to work independently, to be sure of their ability. Shane said, "Responsibility needs to be with the student. I expect independence and I think self-responsibility for learning is the crucial part of learning".

Participants' felt that high expectations included using discipline effectively with compassion and understanding. Charlotte said she expected students to be, "focussed, motivated, have a sense of purpose, wanting to learn, being on task". Sharon said she used "specific positive behaviour reinforcement, a lot of praise", while still having high expectations of achievement. Participants felt that establishing rules and boundaries was essential, so that there was mutual respect between teacher and student. Participants claimed this was done collaboratively, to empower students to be part of the process. Sharon said, "we set these goals together." Participants maintained that students could learn how to set realistic expectations themselves, and understood consequences. Charlotte's said her expectation was that, "motivation for students is from within rather than discipline from external sources". It was expected that the best possible conditions for learning were in a positive, personal learning environment where challenge was high, and risks, anxiety and self-doubt were low.

By bringing out the best in themselves and people around them through high performance expectations, participants claimed it allowed them to show their real talents and potential, and to be themselves – the same expectations they had of students. Shane

summarised: “I suppose there is not much difference between performance in students and performance in teachers. It is all about giving it your best”.

Conclusion

Exemplary teachers in this study had an overwhelming passion for learning and excellence in terms of expectations for themselves and the students they taught, an ability to reflect in a self-critical and natural way, a genuine desire to interact and engage with people, and above all, a caring disposition towards people and their performance. The way participants talked about performance determined how the phenomena of performance, was understood. These teachers saw themselves as learners, continuously developing, and through a strong self-belief, changing as their knowledge changed. How and why they made decisions was closely linked to their beliefs, assumptions, and dispositions they held.

From my own experience as a teacher, it also appeared that a teacher’s perspective on performance would influence his or her effectiveness and motivation. This motivation drove the exemplary teachers in this study to not only continually seek new challenges but also exhibit high standards of professionalism. Decisions around performance became linked to pedagogical, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and the teacher was the person with this knowledge. This situated participants as being the ‘expert’ in what constituted performance for their students and for themselves. It was therefore important to not prefigure the notion of ‘performance’ in teaching. Perspectives revealed there was no single way of understanding performance; rather this was determined to some extent by participants’ worldview. How exemplary teachers in this

study enacted their perspectives on performance was an integral part of their capacity as a reflective teacher and the expectations they had of themselves and in particular students. Participants revealed themselves as having faith in themselves and others, as well as a strong sense of self and concern for others, what Cammock (2001) called the 'heart of character' (p. 141), and a passionate commitment to influence others and make a difference. Exemplary teachers in this study wanted to motivate students for life. They walked the talk!

There is so much more to learn about teaching and learning from those who excel at teaching. To understand how to harness the life experiences of teachers and channel them into contributing to develop more effective teacher role identities, would be a valid activity for teacher education institutions. As educators, we need to ask ourselves, how do we motivate all teachers to intrinsically and subconsciously, look at themselves, to maintain and increase performance?

Performance appraisal within performance management systems in New Zealand schools should inspire people to a passion for their jobs or even a cause. The perspectives of participants suggested that appraisal measurements were the least important part of the process. Participants' perspectives indicated that of most importance, are people who listen, care, engage, ask, and reflect: the human process of talking and thinking – not a paper based process divorced from staff. Participants said that they enacted excitement, passion, what they were here for – the betterment of students and themselves, in their performance. Performance management is much more complex when considering these intangibles, in addition to the competencies, knowledge, skill, abilities – the key things that people have and bring to an organisation.

There is a need to review current thinking regarding performance criteria of teachers and the language used to attributable characteristics, given that this study has portrayed the concept of performance as largely intrinsically located for these exemplary teachers, and focus more on the person, rather than technical expertise.

In this study, exemplary teachers' perspectives on performance showed that they were emotionally committed to learn, motivated, and through thinking and accessing information in a variety of ways, were prepared to learn in a worldly way. Csikszentmihalyi (cited in Salovey et al, 1998) described this as a person experiencing optimal flow, and such a state engendered a thirst for learning and experience that participants in this study wanted to repeat, and do again and again. They were passionate about choosing to use their ability and skills to make learning exciting and interesting for students in the context that they perceived students and society expected. These exemplary teachers saw it as their moral responsibility to serve society, to fulfil a need. Their perspectives demonstrated that if you open up all opportunities, others too will experience a self-rewarding state of flow, in a variety of contexts, and therefore balance was achieved. What made a teaching activity so special for the exemplary teachers in this study was the feeling one got from the activity itself. They have taken charge of their conscious experiences and inner life. In the words of William Arthur Ward (cited in Stewart, 1989): "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires." (p.2)

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